THOREAU:

HIS LIFE AND AIMS

H. A. PAGE

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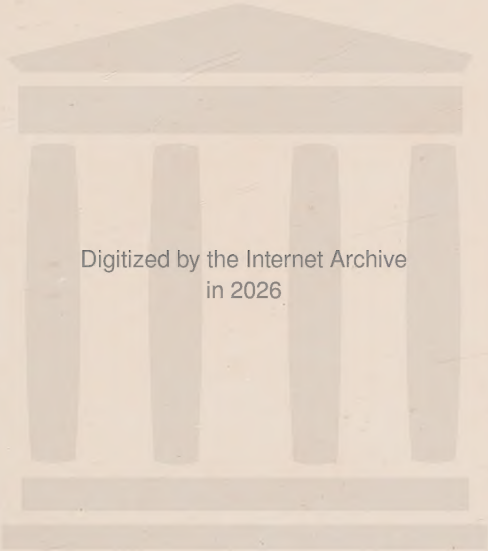

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ARTIST-BIOGRAPHIES.

PUBLISHERS' ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE growth of a popular interest in art and its history has been very rapid during the last decade of American life, and is still in progress. This interest is especially directed towards the lives of artists themselves; and a general demand exists for a uniform series of biographies of those most eminent, which shall possess the qualities of reliability, compactness, and cheapness.

To answer this demand the present series has been projected. The publishers have intrusted its preparation to Mr. M. F. Sweetser, whose qualities of thoroughness in research and fidelity in statement have been proved in other fields of authorship. It is believed that by the omission of much critical and discursive matter commonly found in art biographies, an account of an artist's life may be presented, which is at once truthful and attractive, within the limits prescribed for these volumes.

The series will be published at the rate of one or two volumes each month, at 50 cents each volume, and will contain the lives of the most famous artists of mediæval and modern times. It will include the lives of many of the following: —

Raphael,	Claude,	Van Dyck,
Michael Angelo,	Poussin,	Gainsborough,
Leonardo da Vinci,	Delacroix,	Reynolds,
Titian,	Delaroche,	Wilkie,
Tintoretto,	Greuze,	Lawrence,
Paul Veronese,	Dürer,	Landseer,
Guido,	Rubens,	Turner,
Murillo,	Rembrandt,	West,
Velasquez,	Holbein,	Copley,
Salvator Rosa,	Teniers,	Allston.

THOREAU:

HIS LIFE AND AIMS.

A Study.

By H. A. PAGE,

AUTHOR OF
'LIFE OF THOMAS DE QUINCEY,' 'MEMOIR OF HAWTHORNE,' ETC.

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BOSTON:
JAMES R. OSGOOD & COMPANY,
Late Ticknor & Fields, and Fields, Osgood & Co.
1877.

Author's Edition:

FROM ADVANCE PROOF SHEETS.

A piteous lot it were to flee from man,
And not rejoice in nature. . . . .
For the man,
Who in this spirit, communes with the forms
Of Nature, who, with understanding heart,
Doth know and love such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no disquietude,
No vengeance, and no hatred, needs must feel
The joy of that pure principle of love
So deeply that, unsatisfied with aught
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
But seek for objects of a kindred love
In fellow-natures and a kindred joy."

WORDSWORTH'S *Excursion*.

"I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men's lives; some such account as he would send to his kindred from a distant land; for if he has lived sincerely, it must have been in a distant land to me."

PREFACE.

TILL within a few years ago the name of Thoreau stood to me for morbid sentiment, weak rebellion, and contempt for society. If I met with his name in general literature, it was usually with an implied protest against the main drift of his teaching and aims. He had done some original things and written pure and beautiful passages, but these were chips and straws cast up by a steady current of morbid and stoical egotism. A particular study on which I was engaged led me into frequent contact with Thoreau. I found that his friends loved him, and that he loved them; that, in spite of an outer coating of stoicism and protest, he was true and tender of heart; that, though he was sometimes extreme in his expressions of dislike for the artificial make-believes of modern society, he loved individual men, and most that which was individual in them, showing the utmost patience and toleration in his association with others; that his love of Nature and his power over animals, which were so express and characteristic in him, did not lead him to

sour retreat from society, but rather to seek a new point of relation to it, by which a return might be possible and profitable; and that, in one word, the common view of Thoreau was quite wrong, or at any rate, needed many qualifications. I began a systematic study of his writings, and gathered traces of him in many out-of-the-way corners. As I gazed —

"A new planet swam into my ken."

A self-sufficing but kindly and patriotic man took the place of the 'morbid hermit.' The solitary of Walden was the first who came forth, and spoke decidedly in public for John Brown, of Harper's Ferry, having himself run risks by his personal efforts, and freed not a few slaves. I wanted to find a reconciling point for what seemed inconsistent and exclusive. Morbid hermits, stoics, or sentimentalists do not usually show such a concern for weak and down-trodden fellow-creatures, or so practical and ready a power to aid them; and as Thoreau could do what he did, and never feel as though there was any inconsistency between Walden life and anti-slavery action, I was desirous to satisfy myself, by closer scrutiny, of his real aims and objects. With considerable labor and time, as I have said, I did it. A very slight sketch I wrote as the immediate result, in one of the *Quarterlies*, was received so favorably — spoken of in

The Spectator, for example, as "a new revelation," and by the *Scotsman* as one of the "most interesting studies"—that I was led to believe a fuller picture would be welcome to not a few. The nature-instinct in Thoreau was so strong that, as I believe, it may even do something to aid in the interpretation of certain phenomena of so distant a period as the Middle Ages. I see a kind of real likeness between this so-called 'Stoic' of America, with his unaffected love for the slave, his wonderful sympathies and attractions for the lower creatures, his simplicities, and his liking for the labor of the hand, and that St. Francis, whose life has recently been made fresh and real to us by the skillful pen of Mrs. Oliphant. All I claim for Thoreau is a disinterested and not a one-sided and prejudiced hearing. Because he hated the hypocrisies and make-shifts of our modern social life, and plainly said so, do not let us therefore conclude that he was *only* morbid and stoical; let us do him justice as the patriot and reformer also; and try to discover how it was that the man who held society in such despite on some accounts was so eager to purify it from the worst incubus that probably ever rested upon it. It was Thoreau's love of Nature that formed the basis of his peculiar simplicity and dislike of what was involved, doubtful, and morally tortuous: if we get to understand that, much in his character which is otherwise puzzling,

may become clear to us. Hence it is that I have set out with a comparison which may be very unexpected, but which may be seen to justify itself the more that the reader is inclined to follow, with some degree of sympathy, the facts and passages from Thoreau's writings, which form a leading part of this volume, since in the main I have tried to let the man speak for himself.

It is not pretended that this is a Memoir, or that I am able to present new and unpublished material. I may claim, however, that the scattered materials have never before been brought together in such a form as they are here, and that a pretty complete biography will be found embodied in the book. But it professes to be a Study only; an effort to gain a consistent view of the man's character rather than an exhaustive record of the facts of his life.

H. A. PAGE.

THOREAU: HIS LIFE AND AIMS.

THE HOUSE AT WALDEN.

THOREAU:

HIS LIFE AND AIMS.

I.

IS it possible that some reality underlay the legendary miracles of St. Francis of Assisi? — that we in our Protestant zeal sacrifice the fact in ridding ourselves of the adherent imaginations of a reverent populace? The saint, as we are told, esteemed all living things his brethren, and would do them service. He would have them to listen to his preaching, and they listened; the birds of the air, at his order, hushed their song as he preached; the fishes came willingly into his hand, and waited for their dismissal; the little lambs parted from the flock at his call, and came to him, to furnish a most prevailing illustration of his text; the very wolf was subdued and docile under his word and the charm of his love and authority. Miracle, say the Catholic devotees; all wild invention, say

the Protestant dogmatists. The one will have all, the other will accept of none; and so the suggestion of that harmony which once obtained between man and nature, and is still prophesied in unmistakable terms by certain select souls that are sent among us, is absolutely lost to both. For it is not the miraculous or legendary side of the stories of St. Francis's wonderful rule over the animal world that is of most abiding consequence. That was the adhesive garment in which it became the reverent spirit of the catholic Middle Ages to array them.

We remember Mr. Freeman's warning, in speaking of Edward the Confessor: "When a man is once canonized," he says, "his acts and character immediately pass out of the reach of ordinary criticism. Religious edification, and not historical truth, becomes the aim of all who speak or write of one who has been formally enrolled as an object of religious reverence."* But we cautiously act on his maxim here, and discount much. The essential facts which remain attest the truth that sympathy and love in a favored order of constitutions have power to reverse, within certain limits, the stern decree of opposition between man and the brutes, which the necessities, but still more the cruel ravages of the former have caused. Every poet, every lover of nature, has a longing desire to rise to

* "History of the Norman Conquest," vol. ii. p. 21.

this height of sympathy and sweet companionship with the creatures of wood, and wild, and stream. Burns, Cowper, Wordsworth, Shelley, not to speak of Shakespeare, seem to be great poets largely by virtue of it: the one sang "the daisy," and grudged to disturb the contented rest and industry of a field-mouse; the other found sweet content in training his hares; while the third, with his meditative eye, seemed to see a soul even in daffodils and simple flowers that could give him —

> "Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears;"

and the fourth felt impelled to pour out the rapture of his heart as he saw the skylark cleaving the upper air — an "unbodied joy." But with the poets, the desire remains aspiration merely, else in the new delight of realized bliss, they might cease their singing. There is a class of chosen constitutions which realize, in greater or lesser degree, what the poets sigh after. St. Francis clearly was one of these. After we have stripped off all the adhesions, — all that may be credited to the fantastic tricks of credulous reciters, willing to magnify even for the faith's sake, — something still remains. He was mighty in love. "He was a man overflowing with sympathy for man and beast, — for God's creatures — wherever and however he encountered them. Not only was every man his brother, but every animal, — the sheep in the fields, the birds in the

branches, the brother-ass on which he rode, the sister-bees who took refuge in his kind protection. He was the friend of every thing that suffered or rejoiced; no emotion went beyond his sympathy; his heart rose to see the gladness of nature, and melted over the distresses of the smallest and meanest creature on the face of the earth. And by this divine right of nature, every thing trusted in him. The magnetism of the heart, that power which nobody can define, but which it is impossible to ignore, surrounded him like a special atmosphere. That sense of security and sympathy which, we all acknowledge, draws the nobler domestic animals, horses and dogs, to those who love them, embraced with Francis a wider circle, for he loved every thing that had life: —

> 'He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us
> He made and loveth all."

"Such was the unconscious creed of the prophet of Assisi, and there cannot be any doubt that he must have possessed in an almost unexampled degree the power of attracting all creatures to him. With him the sympathetic power was universal; he meant no harm on his part, and had none of that timidity which most of us are moved by in the presence of the most timid of God's creatures, — that fear that they

must misapprehend our intentions and set us down as enemies in disguise, which make our steps stealthy, and our movements treacherous among the little birds, and the wild creatures of the woods and fields. We cannot divest ourselves of the feeling that they must suspect us. But Francis had no such feeling; his sense of brotherhood was real, not fictitious; he had the courage of good intention, feared nothing and was not feared." *

We read not long ago, in the account of a traveller-naturalist, that in some of the primeval forests of the South, rare birds, undisturbed, eyed him inquiringly, without fear, when he was within a yard of the branches where they sat, till, smitten with the scientific passion for specimens, he knocked some of them down with a stick. But after repeated recourse to the stick, we are assured that, though our traveller-naturalist wandered far and wide in these almost boundless forests, no more was he allowed to approach the birds he most sought to reach. It was as though telegrams of misery and fear had in some unknown tongue been sent forth in all directions. The advent of man had become an omen of evil alone.

Species would appear to vary much, however; and naturalists hardly seem to render so clear reasons *as they might* for so great differences. Professor Sir

* Mrs. Oliphant's "St. Francis of Assisi," pp. 118, 119.

Wyville Thomson, Bart., for example, says, in writing of the Falkland Islands: —

"The Government House is very like a Shetland or Orkney manse, stone-built, slated, and grey, without the least shelter. In the square grass paddock, surrounded by a low wall, between the house and the shore, a very ornamental flock of upland geese were standing and preening their feathers the first time we called there. This tameness of the sea-birds is still more remarkable in the Falkland Islands, and a strange contrast to their extreme wildness in the Straits of Magellan; there we stalked the kelp-goose (*Cloephaga antarctica*) and the steamer-duck (*Micropterus cinereus*) day after day, with great labor and but little success, finding great difficulty in getting even within long range of them; while in the Falklands the same species were all about, standing on the shore within stone-throw, or diving and fishing quietly within a few yards of the boats. I was told that they are not now nearly so tame, however, as they were some years ago. Almost every evening we met some one coming into the settlement with a string of upland geese for the pot; and I suppose it is beginning to dawn upon the poor birds that their new neighbors are not so harmless as they look. Very likely it may take some generations of experience to make them thoroughly wary, and the difference between the birds of the islands and

those of the straits may probably be that, while the former have been safe in their primeval solitude up to within a recent period, the latter have been selecting themselves for ages on their capacity for eluding the craft of hungry Patagonians and Fuegians."

Dr. Darwin tells us, in the introduction to his valuable work, "Plants and Animals under Domestication:" "At the Galapagos Archipelago I pushed with the muzzle of my gun hawks from a branch, and held out a pitcher of water for other birds to alight on and drink. Quadrupeds and birds which have seldom been disturbed by man, dread him no more than do our English birds the cows or horses grazing in the fields."

What we are now chiefly concerned to remark is, that such instances may be taken to attest the fact of the existence of an era of greater harmony between man and nature than we have practical knowledge of. It has found a vague record in the mythologies of most nations. One of our own poets has powerfully sung of it as a Paradise Lost, — a paradise, let us hope, that may in part be restored: —

> "I'm truly sorry man's dominion
> Has broken Nature's social union,
> And justifies that ill opinion
> Which makes thee startle
> At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
> And fellow-mortal."

And as if to keep the tradition alive and in fullest

force, every now and then God still sends among us a man or woman with a peculiar, if a limited gift of reconcilement, only great enough to prove that, in the earlier days, the myths might have had a foundation in fact, that Orpheus is really no fable.

Mr. Cotton, a clergyman, the son of a late Governor of the Bank of England, took bees, in the first place, out to Australia, and afterwards to the islands of the South Pacific. His behavior to his bees was the wonder of all who were in the ships with him. He would call them by certain sounds, and they came to him, covered him as he lay, and he would actually handle and fondle them in such a fashion as would have been to another very dangerous. Then, when he wished to relieve himself of them, he gathered them together as one would a mass of loose worsted into a ball, took the mass near to the hive, and at a given sound or signal, they flew apart and retired to their proper home.

Then there was Bisset, that wonderful Scotchman, whose success in training and making tractable pigs, turtles, and gold-fish* amply proved that there lies in

*Bisset's success with cats and dogs and monkeys only surpassed in some degree what others had accomplished before him; but it stirs something like incredulity when we read of his success with turtles and gold-fishes, and we only recover faith when we find the facts attested. "In the course of six months' teaching, he made a turtle fetch and carry like a dog; and having chalked the floor and blackened its claws, could direct it to trace out any

most animals undeveloped possibilities of education and companionship for man, and whose experience presented but a new version of that of M. du Rouil, of whose wonderful dogs and his relations to them Mr. Hamerton has given such a striking and touching account in the closing section of his "Chapters on Animals." We confess that our curiosity respecting the history of these dogs after the death of the master who had developed such marvellous powers in them almost made us address Mr. Hamerton on the subject, and we only refrained from doing so when we thought that no doubt he had already been troubled by questions on that point.

Mr. Hamerton, in the course of a very interesting section of his volume on animals, thus refers to the late Mr. Waterton, and to the well-known "birds' friend" in the Tuileries gardens:—

"The wild bird is not looked upon as a creature to be treated with more hospitality than a wolf; everybody fires at him as at some noxious vermin. Even the scientific naturalist adds yearly to the long catalogue of destruction, to supply his dissecting-room with

given name in the company. His confidence even led him to try experiments on a gold-fish. . . . In the course of twelve months, he made the pig — an animal usually supposed the most obstinate and perverse in nature — become most tractable." Bisset was a native of Perth; and, having trained many animals, and exhibited their performances in Edinburgh, London, Dublin, and other places, died in 1783.

bodies, and his glass cases with stuffed skins. And so it comes to pass that the wild birds of civilized countries are becoming every year more rare, and we are all as ignorant about them as people must be who have nothing but books of science, without that personal familiarity which alone makes knowledge alive. The late Mr. Waterton, the naturalist, gave a fair example in his gentle hospitality. Round his house, in Yorkshire, was a great space of land, with wood and water, encircled by a protecting wall; within that space no gun was ever fired, it was the guarded paradise of the birds. In their assurance of perfect peace they did not shun man's friendly observation. Without our stupid destructiveness, there might be many such bird Edens as that. The birds do not avoid us naturally. It has always been noted by voyagers that in lands hitherto uninhabited and unvisited by man, they sat quietly within gunshot, looking at their strange visitors with undismayed curiosity. If men had treated them kindly, they might have been our friends. Did the reader ever happen to meet with the well-known birds' friend in the garden of the Tuileries,—an old man, whose life had been saddened by the loss of those he loved, and who sought consolation in his solitude, and found it in the friendship of little birds? They flew about his head, not as the bird in Rubens's picture of his sons, which is held by a piece of string,

but bound by no thread except the invisible one of their gratitude, and affection, and expectation. Not entirely disinterested or unselfish in their love, yet it was full of trust, and that trust quite a personal and peculiar one, for it was given to him alone. A minute before he came into the garden they were wild birds still, and when he had gone home they returned to their lofty trees; but whilst he walked there in the afternoon, they went and talked with him as if he had been their father, settling on his shoulders and his arms, and picking the crumbs close to his careful feet. They must have wondered at his absence when he died; and even now, though things are so changed since then, and the Palace is a blackened ruin, and it seems as if centuries had passed, I believe that the little sparrows and finches still remember their old friend, and would make a fluttering cloud of gladness about his head if he could come from the cemetery where he sleeps, and revisit the chestnut shades."

Then there was Mr. Rarey with his horses; and each of us has known some one who had more than ordinary power of attracting or managing this or that class of animals. Madame Sand, one of the most celebrated of French writers, declared herself to possess this power over birds, and described it as hereditary in her family. Its possessors cannot analyze the power nor account for it; it is native, underived, like

the gift of singing or the power of pleasing children. The greatest of all later instances is the American, Thoreau. When we read of many of his experiences, we could believe ourselves to be contemplating a modern St. Francis. It is true that in many ways they differed. Thoreau *appeared* to be contemptuous of authority, and could hardly, we fancy, at any period have been a Catholic; he was more of a pantheist than we could wish; but, then, we find that a certain suggestion of pantheism underlies the idea of the brotherhood of man and brute, and insinuates itself unconsciously into the utterances even of St. Francis. So, in spite of a striking divergence in the circumstances, we find the points of contact or likeness are more prevailing than are the points of difference. We shall perhaps be better able, after studying Thoreau, to distinguish for ourselves between fact and legend in the life of Francis; while the flavor which the saint's love of nature imparted to his spiritual fervor will illustrate some tendencies in the American. Not seldom the best way to resolve the difficulty and darkness of a remote life is by looking reverently at the reality of a kindred life lived near at hand.

We have often felt it to be little less than amusing to see how ecclesiastical writers of a certain order have been put to it in dealing with St. Francis and his recorded doings with the animals. Their reverence

for the man was in odd contrast with the rationalistic tone of thought which colored all their views on this point, and which they could ill escape from. They became lamely apologetic. Even so sympathetic a biographer as Principal Tulloch, of St. Andrews, is all wide-awake lest he should commit himself, and he only glances shyly and unsteadily at this aspect of the matter.* Had he known that within the memory of hundreds of men still living, nearly all that is credited to St. Francis was actually done by a 'solitary' in the woods of Walden, we are persuaded that the very reverend and worthy Principal might have put a somewhat bolder face upon it, and not allowed his ultra-rationalist propensity to triumph quite so far as it has done.

It is, at all events, with a dim hope of this kind that we have made such an apparently wide and, it may be, unexpected circuit to introduce Thoreau to English readers more fully than he has yet been. If his life and rare capability should be found to shed any light whatsoever upon an old but unique biography, does it not claim and deserve such attention as we can bestow upon it? If a life, spent for the most part amid the bustle and fervor of American city strife, can illuminate in any degree one of the puzzles of the Middle Ages, we shall not misspend our time in the endeavor to read its main outlines aright.

* "Good Words," 1877, p. 449.

Over and above all this it may be said that Thoreau's life, liberally read, might be taken to show that love of nature, even though allied to mysticism, is a safer road for human nature than that laid open by rationalism and its allies.

Henry David Thoreau was born at Concord, Massachusetts, in 1817. He was the youngest son of a French immigrant, who was by trade a lead-pencil maker, and had achieved such a measure of success in his adopted country as enabled him to aim at giving his sons a thoroughly good education. Henry was sent to Harvard University while still young, and graduated in 1837; but he achieved little or no distinction either at school or college. He had his own ways of looking at and doing things, and, as is not seldom the case with genius, he was somewhat slow at working his way to the end of a set problem, though having once done so, it was more than mastered. He would not fall into regular studies, and did not attract the masters. Nor did he make friends of his fellow students, but lived a somewhat solitary life. On leaving college, he and an elder brother kept an academy at Concord for a year or two; and then he was noticeable for his love of rambling abroad in his spare hours, collecting specimens of natural history. He was un-

like the sentimentalist, especially in his capacity of attachment to locality, for at no place but Concord did he ever make a permanent home, however much he loved to wander. The most important event of this period was a journey to the White Mountains with his brother John, which seemed to awaken in him new capacities of knowledge and pleasure.

Of the school teaching he at length got wearied, and then applied himself to his father's craft, obtaining certificates for having made a better pencil than any then in use. There is a characteristic story told that he and his father, to show the excellence of their work, resolved to make as good a pencil out of paste as those sawed from black lead in London. The result was accomplished, and the certificate was obtained, Thoreau himself claiming a good share of the success, as he found the means to cut the plates. But more characteristic than all, perhaps, is the fact that, when he was congratulated on fortune's door being thus thrown wide open to him, he declared that he would not make another pencil, as he did not wish to do again what he had done once. At this his friends were, of course, greatly disappointed; but he stood firm and adventured on other industries, doing also a considerable amount of travel and observation during the next few years.

His mathematical knowledge, and a natural faculty for mensuration, sharpened by his habit of ascertaining

the sizes and distances of the objects which interested him, leading naturally to an intimate knowledge of the country about Concord, had caused him to drift into the regular profession of land surveyor. His great accuracy and skill in this work soon found him all the employment that he wanted. The farmers, no less than his townsmen, learned to respect and admire him, though at first they had thought of him only as an odd, unaccountable kind of person. They discovered that he knew more of their lands than they themselves did, and this was a kind of superiority they could appreciate. They came to trust and to love him, too, for genuine qualities of mind and character,—an appreciation and affection which he fully returned.

His first book, written during this time, grew out of a voyage on the Concord and Merrimac rivers, which he made in 1839, with his brother John, who sympathized with him in many of his tastes, but who died early, and whose death Thoreau deeply lamented. He makes it a special matter of congratulation that they had built their own boat,—a circumstance which, as he fancied, gave such an air of unity and interest as inspired kindred feelings to those of the earliest explorers. He thus describes it:—

"Our boat, which had cost us a week's labor in the spring, was in form like a fisherman's dory, fifteen feet long by three and a half in breadth at the widest part,

painted green below, with a border of blue, — with reference to the two elements in which it was to spend its existence. It had been loaded the evening before at our door, half a mile from the river, with potatoes and melons, from a patch which we had cultivated, and a few utensils; and was provided with wheels, in order to be rolled around falls, as well as with two sets of oars, and several slender poles for shoving in shallow places, and also two masts, one of which served for a tent pole at night; for a buffalo's skin was to be our bed, and a tent of cotton cloth our roof. It was strongly built, but heavy, and hardly of better model than usual. If rightly made, a boat would be a sort of amphibious animal, a creature of two elements, related by one half its structure to some swift and shapely fish, and by the other to some strong-winged and graceful bird. The fish shows where there should be the greater breadth of beam and depth in the hold; its fins direct where to set the oars, and the tail gives some hint for the form and position of the rudder. The bird shows how to rig and trim the sails, and what form to give the prow that it may balance the boat, and divide the air and water best. These hints we had but partially obeyed. But the eyes, though they are no sailors, will never be satisfied with any model, however fashionable, which does not answer all the requisitions of art. However, as art is all of a ship

but the wood, and yet the wood alone will rudely serve the purpose of a ship, so our boat being of wood gladly availed itself of the old law that the heavier shall float the lighter, and though a dull water-fowl, proved a sufficient buoy for our purpose.

> 'Were it the will of Heaven, an osier bow
> Were vessel safe enough the seas to plow.'

"Some village friends stood upon a promontory lower down the stream to wave us a last farewell; but we, having already performed these rites, with excusable reserve, as befits those who are embarked on unusual enterprises, who behold but speak not, silently glided past the firm lands of Concord, both peopled cape and lovely summer meadow, with steady sweeps. And yet we did unbend so far as to let our guns speak for us, when at length we had swept out of sight, and thus left the woods to ring again with their echoes; and, it may be, many russet-clad children, lurking in these broad meadows with the bittern and the woodcock and the rail, though wholly concealed by brakes and hard-hack and meadow-sweet, heard our salute that afternoon."

The account of this week's excursion is full of picturesque description, — as it could not fail to be; but it likewise contains many wise reflections, and some fine criticisms of our great authors, Chaucer in par-

ticular. Nor is it devoid of scientific interest, though, as yet, he seems more inclined to muse and to make holiday than to do serious work. There is none of the severity of settled purpose about the man or the book. He is gathering materials, but he can afford to make a pastime of his researches, and not to bustle about it. This passage affords us a genial glimpse of the brothers as they go, quietly observing and thinking, and stimulating each other: —

"We rowed for some hours between glistening banks before the sun had dried the grass and leaves, or the day had established its character. Its serenity at last seemed the more profound and secure from the denseness of the morning's fog. The river became swifter, and the scenery more pleasing than before. The banks were steep and clayey for the most part, and trickling with water; and where a spring oozed out a few feet above the river, the boatmen had cut a trough out of a slab with their axes, and placed it so as to receive the water and fill their jugs conveniently. Sometimes this purer and cooler water, bursting out from under a pine or a rock, was collected into a basin close to the edge of, and level with, the river, — a fountain-head of the Merrimac. So near along life's stream are the fountains of innocence and youth, making fertile its sandy margin; and the *voyageur* will do well to replenish his vessels often at these uncontaminated

sources. Some youthful spring, perchance, still empties with tinkling music into the oldest river, even when it is falling into the sea; and we imagine that its music is distinguished by the river gods from the general lapse of the stream, and falls sweeter on their ears in proportion as it is nearer to the ocean. As the evaporations of the river feed thus the unexpected springs which filter through its banks, so perchance our aspirations fall back again in springs on the margin of life's stream to refreshen and purify it. The yellow and tepid river may float his scow, and cheer his eye with its reflections and its ripples, but the boatman quenches his thirst at this small rill alone. It is this purer and cooler element that chiefly sustains his life."

So they go from point to point, mingling the enjoyments of literature with those of nature; and thus they celebrate their return to their home and its duties: —

"With a bending sail we glided rapidly by Tyngsboro' and Chelmsford, each holding in one hand half of a tart country apple-pie which we had purchased to celebrate our return, and in the other a fragment of the newspaper in which it had been wrapped, devouring these with divided relish and learning the news which had transpired since we sailed. The river here opened into a broad and straight reach of great length, which we bounded merrily over before a smacking

breeze, with a devil-may-care look in our faces, and our boat a white bone in its mouth, and a speed which greatly astonished some scow-boatmen whom we met. The wind in the horizon rolled like a flood over valley and plain, and every tree bent to the blast, and the mountains like schoolboys turned their cheeks to it. They were great and current motions, — the flowing sail, the running stream, the waving tree, the roving wind. The north wind stepped readily into the harness which we had provided, and pulled us along with good will. Sometimes we sailed as gently and steadily as the clouds overhead, watching the receding shores and the motions of our sail; the play of its pulse, so like our own lives, so thin and yet so full of life, so noiseless when it labored hardest, so noisy and impatient when least effective; now bending to some generous impulse of the breeze, and then fluttering and flapping with a kind of human-suspense. It was the scale on which the varying temperature of distant atmospheres was graduated, and it was some attraction for us that the breeze it played with had been out of doors so long. Thus we sailed, not being able to fly, but, as next best, making a long furrow in the fields of the Merrimac towards our home, with our wings spread, but never lifting our keel from the watery trench, — gracefully flowing homeward with our brisk and willing team, wind and stream, pulling together.

the former yet a wild steer, yoked to her more sedate fellow. It was very near flying, as when the duck rushes through the water with an impulse of the wings, throwing the spray about her before she can rise."

His "Walk to Wachusett," which was undertaken in 1843, has a value beyond its scientific references. It yields an additional proof that, unlike the egotist or solitary, he could easily make himself at home with the common people, and met with the heartiest hospitality wherever he went. It cost him nothing to enter into their ways; and he never had aught but a pleasant word for them now or at any later period. The following account of this walk to Wachusett is given as much for its significant closing words of gratitude as for its admirable description and scientific thought: —

"As we went on our way late in the afternoon, we refreshed ourselves by bathing our feet in every rill that crossed the road, and anon, as we were able to walk in the shadows of the hills, recovered our morning elasticity. Passing through Sterling, we reached the banks of the Stillwater, in the western part of the town, at evening, where is a small village collected. We fancied that there was already a certain western look about this place, a smell of pines and roar of water, recently confined by dams, belying its name, which were exceedingly grateful. When the first

inroad has been made, a few acres leveled, and a few houses erected, the forest looks wilder than ever. Left to herself, Nature is always more or less civilized, and delights in a certain refinement; but where the axe has encroached upon the edge of the forest, the dead and unsightly limbs of the pine, which she had concealed with green banks of verdure, are exposed to sight. This village had, as yet, no post-office, nor any settled name. In the small villages which we entered, the villagers gazed after us, with a complacent, almost compassionate look, as if we were just making our *début* in the world at a late hour. 'Nevertheless,' did they seem to say, 'come and study us, and learn men and manners.' So is each one's world but a clearing in the forest, so much open and enclosed ground. The landlord had not yet returned from the field with his men, and the cows had yet to be milked. But we remembered the inscription on the wall of the Swedish inn, 'You will find at Trolhatte excellent bread, meat, and wine, provided you bring them with you,' and were contented. But I must confess it did somewhat disturb our pleasure, in this withdrawn spot, to have our own village newspaper handed us by our host, as if the greatest charm the country offered to the traveller was the facility of communication with the town. Let it recline on its own everlasting hills,

and not be looking out from their summits for some petty Boston or New York in the horizon.

"At intervals we heard the murmuring of water, and the slumberous breathing of crickets throughout the night; and left the inn the next morning in the gray twilight, after it had been hallowed by the night air, and when only the innocent cows were stirring, with a kind of regret. It was only four miles to the base of the mountain, and the scenery was already more picturesque. Our road lay along the course of the Stillwater, which was brawling at the bottom of a deep ravine, filled with pines and rocks, tumbling fresh from the mountains, so soon, alas! to commence its career of usefulness. At first a cloud hung between us and the summit, but it was soon blown away. As we gathered the raspberries, which grew abundantly by the roadside, we fancied that that action was consistent with a lofty prudence, as if the traveller who ascends into a mountainous region should fortify himself by eating of such light ambrosial fruits as grow there, and drinking of the springs which gush out from the mountain sides, as he gradually inhales the subtler and purer atmosphere of those elevated places, thus propitiating the mountain gods by a sacrifice of their own fruits. The gross products of the plains and valleys are for such as dwell therein; but it seemed

to us that the juices of this berry had relation to the thin air of the mountain tops.

"In due time we began to ascend the mountain, passing first through a grand sugar-maple wood which bore the marks of the auger, then a denser forest, which gradually became dwarfed till there were no trees whatever. We at length pitched our tent on the summit. It is but nineteen hundred feet above the village of Princeton, and three thousand above the level of the sea; but by this slight elevation it is infinitely removed from the plain, and when we reached it, we felt a sense of remoteness, as if we had travelled into distant regions, to Arabia Petræa, or the farthest east. A robin upon a staff was the highest object in sight. Swallows were flying about us, and the chewink and cuckoo were heard near at hand. The summit consists of a few acres, destitute of trees, covered with bare rocks, interspersed with blueberry bushes, raspberries, gooseberries, strawberries, moss, and a fine wiry grass. The common yellow lily and dwarf-cornel grow abundantly in the crevices of the rocks. This clear space, which is gently rounded, is bounded a few feet lower by a thick shrubbery of oaks, with maples, aspens, beeches, cherries, and occasionally a mountain-ash intermingled, among which we found the bright blueberries of the Solomon's seal, and the fruit of the pyrola. From the foundation of a wooden

observatory, which was formerly erected on the highest point, forming a rude, hollow structure of stone, a dozen feet in diameter, and five or six in height, we could see Monadnock, in simple grandeur, in the north-west, rising nearly a thousand feet higher, still the 'far blue mountain,' though with an altered profile. The first day the weather was so hazy that it was in vain we endeavored to unravel the obscurity. It was like looking into the sky again, and the patches of forest here and there seem to flit like clouds over a lower heaven. As to voyagers of an aerial Polynesia, the earth seemed like a larger island in the ether; on every side, even as low as we, the sky shutting down, like an unfathomable deep around it, a blue Pacific island, where who knows what islanders inhabit? and as we sail near its shores we see the waving of trees, and hear the lowing of kine.

"We read Virgil and Wordsworth in our tent, with new pleasure there, while waiting for a clearer atmosphere, nor did the weather prevent our appreciating the simple truth and beauty of Peter Bell:—

> 'And he had lain beside his asses
> On lofty Cheviot hills:'
>
> 'And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales,
> Among the rocks and winding *scars;*
> Where deep and low the hamlets lie
> Beneath their little patch of sky
> And little lot of stars.'

Who knows but this hill may one day be a Helvellyn, or even a Parnassus, and the muses haunt here, and other Homers frequent the neighboring plains —

> Not unconcerned Wachusett rears his head
> Above the field, so late from Nature won,
> With patient brow reserved, as one who read
> New annals in the history of man.

"The blueberries which the mountain afforded, added to the milk we had brought, made our frugal supper, while for entertainment the even-song of the wood-thrush rung along the ridge. Our eyes rested on no painted ceiling nor carpeted hall, but on skies of Nature's painting, and hills and forests of her embroidery. Before sunset, we rambled along the ridge to the north, while a hawk soared still above us. It was a place where gods might wander so solemn and solitary, and removed from all contagion with the plain. As the evening came on, the haze was condensed in vapor, and the landscape became more distinctly visible, and numerous sheets of water were brought to light.

> Et jam summa procul villarum culmina fumant,
> Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ.
>
> And now the tops of the villas smoke afar off,
> And the shadows fall longer from the high mountains.

"As we stood on the stone tower while the sun was setting, we saw the shades of night creep gradually over the valleys of the east, and the inhabitants went

into their houses, and shut their doors, while the moon silently rose up, and took possession of that part. And then the same scene was repeated on the west side, as far as Connecticut and the Green Mountains, and the sun's rays fell on us two alone, of all New England men.

"It was the night but one before the full of the moon, so bright that we could see to read distinctly by moonlight, and in the evening strolled over the summit without danger. There was, by chance, a fire blazing on Monadnock that night, which lighted up the whole western horizon, and by making us aware of a community of mountains, made our position seem less solitary. But at length the wind drove us to the shelter of our tent, and we closed its door for the night, and fell asleep.

"It was thrilling to hear the wind roar over the rocks, at intervals when we waked, for it had grown quite cold and windy. The night was in its elements, simple even to majesty in that bleak place, — a bright moonlight and a piercing wind. It was at no time darker than twilight within the tent, and we could easily see the moon through its transparent roof as we lay; for there was the moon still above us, with Jupiter and Saturn on either hand, looking down on Wachusett, and it was a satisfaction to know that they were our fellow-travellers still, as high and out of our

reach as our own destiny. Truly the stars were given for a consolation to man. We should not know but our life were fated to be always grovelling, but it is permitted to behold them, and surely they are deserving of a fair destiny. We see laws which never fail, of whose failure we never conceived; and their lamps burn all the night, too, as well as day, so rich and lavish is that nature which can afford this superfluity of light.

"The morning twilight began as soon as the moon had set, and we arose and kindled our fire, whose blaze might have been seen for thirty miles around. As the daylight increased it was remarkable how rapidly the wind went down. There was no dew on the summit, but coldness supplied its place. When the dawn had reached its prime, we enjoyed the view of a distant horizon line, and could fancy ourselves at sea, and the distant hills the waves in the horizon, as seen from the deck of a vessel. The cherry-birds flitted around us, the nut-hatch and flicker were heard among the bushes, the titmouse perched within a few feet, and the song of the wood-thrush again run along the ridge. At length we saw the sun rise up out of the sea, and shine on Massachusetts; and from this moment the atmosphere grew more and more transparent till the time of our departure, and we began to realize the extent of the view, and how the earth, in some degree, answered to the heavens in breadth, the white

villages to the constellations in the sky. There was little of the sublimity and grandeur which belong to mountain scenery, but an immense landscape to ponder on a summer's day. We could see how ample and roomy is nature. As far as the eye could reach, there was little life in the landscape; the few birds that flitted past did not crowd. The travellers on the remote highways, which intersect the country on every side, had no fellow-travellers for miles before or behind. On every side, the eye ranged over successive circles of towns, rising one above another, like the terraces of a vineyard, till they were lost in the horizon. Wachusett is, in fact, the observatory of the State. There lay Massachusetts, spread out before us in its length and breadth, like a map. There was the level horizon, which told of the sea on the east and south, the well-known hills of New Hampshire on the north, and the misty summits of the Hoosac and Green Mountains, first made visible to us the evening before, blue and unsubstantial, like some bank of clouds which the morning wind would dissipate, on the north-west and west. These last distant ranges, on which the eye rests unwearied, commence with an abrupt boulder in the north, beyond the Connecticut, and travel southward, with three or four peaks dimly seen. But Monadnock, rearing its masculine front in the north-west, is the grandest feature. As we beheld it, we

knew that it was the height of land between the two rivers, on this side the valley of the Merrimac, on that of the Connecticut, fluctuating with their blue seas of air, these rival vales, already teeming with Yankee men along their respective streams, born to what destiny who shall tell? Watatic and the neighboring hills in this State and in New Hampshire are a continuation of the same elevated range on which we were standing. But that New Hampshire bluff, — that promontory of a State, — lowering day and night on this our State of Massachusetts, will longest haunt our dreams.

"We could, at length, realize the place mountains occupy on the land, and how they come into the general scheme of the universe.

"When first we climb their summits and observe their lesser irregularities we do not give credit to the comprehensive intelligence which shaped them; but when afterward we behold their outlines in the horizon, we confess that the hand which moulded their opposite slopes, making one to balance the other, worked round a deep centre, and was privy to the plan of the universe. So is the least part of nature in its bearings referred to all space. These lesser mountain ranges, as well as the Alleghanies, run from the north-east to south-west, and parallel with these mountain streams are the more fluent rivers, answering to the general direction of the coast, the bank of the

great ocean stream itself. Even the clouds, with their thin bars, fall into the same direction by preference, and such even is the course of the prevailing winds, and the migration of men and birds. A mountain-chain determines many things for the statesman and philosopher. The improvements of civilization rather creep along its sides than cross its summit. How often is it a barrier to prejudice and fanaticism! In passing over these heights of land, through their thin atmosphere, the follies of the plain are refined and purified; and as many species of plants do not scale their summits, so many species of folly no doubt do not cross the Alleghanies; it is only the hardy mountain plant that creeps quite over the ridge, and descends into the valley beyond.

"We get a dim notion of the flight of birds, especially of such as fly high in the air, by having ascended a mountain. We can now see what landmarks mountains are to their migrations; how the Catskills and Highlands have hardly sunk to them when Wachusett and Monadnock open a passage to the north-east; how they are guided, too, in their course by the rivers and valleys; and who knows but by the stars, as well as the mountain ranges, and not by the petty landmarks which we use. The bird whose eye takes in the Green Mountains on the one side, and the ocean on the other, need not be at a loss to find its way.

"At noon we descended the mountain, and, having returned to the abodes of men, turned our faces to the east again; measuring our progress, from time to time, by the more ethereal hues which the mountain assumed. Passing swiftly through Stillwater and Sterling, as with a downward impetus, we found ourselves almost at home again in the green meadows of Lancaster, so like our own Concord, for both are watered by two streams which unite near their centres, and have many other features in common. There is an unexpected refinement about this scenery; level prairies of great extent, interspersed with elms and hop-fields and groves of trees, give it almost a classic appearance. This it will be remembered, was the scene of Mrs. Rowlandson's capture, and of other events in the Indian wars, but from this July afternoon, and under that mild exterior, those times seemed as remote as the irruption of the Goths. They were the dark age of New England. On beholding a picture of a New England village as it then appeared, with a fair open prospect, and a light on trees and river, as if it were broad noon, we find we had not thought the sun shone in those days, or that men lived in broad daylight then. We do not imagine the sun shining on hill and valley during Philip's war, nor on the war-path of Paugus, or Standish, or Church, or Lovell, with serene summer weather, but a dim twilight or night did those events

transpire in. They must have fought in the shade of their own dusky deeds.

"At length, as we plodded along the dusty roads, our thoughts became as dusty as they; all thought indeed stopped, thinking broke down, or proceeded only passively in a sort of rhythmical cadence of the confused material of thought, and we found ourselves mechanically repeating some familiar measure which timed with our tread; some verse of the Robin Hood ballads, for instance, which one can recommend to travel by.

> 'Swearers are swift, sayd lyttle John,
> As the wind blows over the hill;
> For if it be never so loud this night,
> Tomorrow it may be still.'

And so it went up hill and down till a stone interrupted the line, when a new verse was chosen.

> 'His shoote it was but loosely shot,
> Yet flewe not the arrowe in vaine,
> For it met one of the sheriffe's men,
> And William-a-Trent was slaine.'

"There is, however, this consolation to the most way-worn traveller, upon the dustiest road, that the path his feet describe is so perfectly symbolical of human life, — now climbing the hills, now descending into the vales. From the summits he beholds the heavens and the horizon, from the vales he looks up to the heights again. He is treading his old lessons

still, and though he may be very weary and travel-worn, it is yet sincere experience.

"Leaving the Nashua, we changed our route a little, and arrived at Stillriver village, in the western part of Harvard, just as the sun was setting. From this place, which lies to the northward, upon the western slope of the same range of hills on which we had spent the noon before, in the adjacent town, the prospect is beautiful, and the grandeur of the mountain outlines unsurpassed. There was such a repose and quiet here at this hour, as if the very hill-sides were enjoying the scene, and we passed slowly along, looking back over the country we had traversed; and listening to the evening song of the robin, we could not help contrasting the equanimity of nature with the bustle and impatience of man. His words and actions presume always a crisis near at hand, but she is for ever silent and unpretending.

"And now that we have returned to the desultory life of the plain, let us endeavor to import a little of that mountain grandeur into it. We will remember within what walls we lie, and understand that this level life too has its summit, and why from the mountain top the deepest valleys have a tinge of blue; that there is elevation in every hour, as no part of the earth is so low that the heavens may not be seen from, and we

have only to stand on the summit of our hour to command an uninterrupted horizon.

"We rested that night at Harvard, and the next morning, while one bent his steps to the nearer village of Groton, the other took his separate and solitary way to the peaceful meadows of Concord; but let him not forget to record the brave hospitality of a farmer and his wife, who generously entertained him at their board, though the poor wayfarer could only congratulate the one on the continuance of hay weather, and silently accept the kindness of the other. Refreshed by this instance of generosity, no less than by the substantial viands set before him, he pushed forward with new vigor, and reached the banks of the Concord before the sun had climbed many degrees into the heavens."

His taste for a 'wild' life was not completely satisfied by these occasional adventures, and his love of nature and of natural history studies suggested a closer association. For years, when not travelling, he had been an almost daily visitor at Walden wood, the bulk of his surveying work lying in it or near to it. The pleasure his roamings in the woods had afforded him was of so pure and inspiring a kind that he was drawn to seek opportunities to carry out his studies of nature yet more consistently and steadily. So he took a great resolve, and in March of 1845 began the building of his house in Walden wood, which, as often happens,

because it has somewhat of an *outré* look, has occupied a wholly disproportionate place in the general notion of Thoreau. "By the middle of April it was framed and ready for raising," and by the 4th of July,—not without significance either, being Independence Day,—he went into occupation. He had purchased the boards of an Irishman's shanty, and exults as he looks on his finished work, that "there is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird's building its own nest."

And a right trim little abode it was, with its one cheerful window and detached office, if we may at all credit the frontispiece of his first work, "Walden." He can exult in the fact that by habit men can do with but little shelter, and vastly admires the Penobscot Indians, who have nothing but a thin tent between them and the snow, and do not suffer by it. Thus he finds that savage life attains in one primitive principle the equality which modern societies vainly yearn for,—the poorest having as good a shelter as the highest! Yet his hatred of waste and shiftlessness was as notable as these other traits. He says in one place, "There is none so poor that he need sit on a pumpkin. That is shiftlessness. There are plenty of such chairs as I like best to be had for the taking of them away." And it is very odd to observe, amid his apparent indifference to wealth and self-interest, the really Yankee

way in which he exults in being able to provide for himself with his own hands, so checkmating nature as to have a balance over. His statement of accounts of the cost of the Walden hut is full of unconscious humor. He recalls, with natural complacency, that at Cambridge College the student pays for his room one dollar eighty-seven and a half cents each year more than his house had cost him, and has thereupon some quaint reflections on true education. He congratulates himself on the absence of all 'baggage,' — 'traps,' as, he says, the popular slang calls it, and avows his conviction that "to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship, but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely," — as the pursuits of the "simple nations are still the sports of the artificial." He himself tells us, when speaking of his book "Walden:" "When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only." He devoted a certain time each week to the work of surveying for the farmers near by; all the rest was devoted to observation and study.

"My house was on the side of a hill, immediately on the edge of the larger wood, in the midst of a young forest of pitch pines and hickories, and half a dozen

rods from the pond, to which a narrow foot path led down the hill. In my front yard grew the strawberry, blackberry, and life-everlasting, johnswort, and golden rod, shrub oaks, and sand cherry, blueberry and ground nut. Near the end of May, the sand cherry (*cerasus pumila*) adorned the sides of the path with its delicate flowers arranged in umbels cylindrically about its short stems, which last, in the fall, weighed down with good sized and handsome cherries, fell over in wreaths like rays on every side. I tasted them out of compliment to nature, though they were scarcely palatable. The sumach (*rhus glabra*) grew luxuriantly about the house, pushing up through the embankment which I had made, and growing five or six feet the first season. Its broad pinnate tropical leaf was pleasant though strange to look on. The large buds, suddenly pushing out late in the spring from dry sticks which had seemed to be dead, developed themselves as by magic into graceful green and tender boughs, an inch in diameter; and sometimes, as I sat at my window, so heedlessly did they grow and tax their weak joints, I heard a fresh and tender bough suddenly fall like a fan to the ground, when there was not a breath of air stirring, broken off by its own weight. In August the large masses of berries, which, when in flower, had attracted many wild bees, gradually assumed their

bright velvety crimson hue, and by their weight again bent down and broke the tender limbs."

Nevertheless, he has some difficulties and adventures; and must indenture himself for a short while to the stern task-mistress, Experience, before he can feel himself fully free to fraternize with Nature:—

"As I had little aid from horses or cattle, or hired men or boys, or improved implements of husbandry, I was much slower, and became much more intimate with my beans than usual. But labor of the hands, even when pursued to the verge of drudgery, is perhaps never the worst form of idleness. It has a constant and imperishable moral, and to the scholar it yields a classic result. A very *agricola laboriosus* was I to travellers bound westward through Lincoln and Wayland to nobody knows where; they sitting at their ease in gigs, with elbows on knees, and reins loosely hanging in festoons; I the home-staying, laborious native of the soil. But soon my homestead was out of their sight and thought. It was the only open and cultivated field for a great distance on either side of the road; so they made the most of it; and sometimes the man in the field heard more of travellers' gossip and comment than was meant for his ear: 'Beans so late! peas so late!'—for I continued to plant when others had begun to hoe,—the ministerial husbandman had not suspected it. 'Corn, my boy,

for fodder; corn for fodder.' 'Does he *live* there?' asks the black bonnet of the gray coat; and the hard-featured farmer reins up his grateful dobbin to inquire what you are doing where he sees no manure in the furrow, and recommends a little chip dirt, or any little waste stuff, or, it may be, ashes or plaster. But here were two acres and a half of furrows, and only a hoe for cart and two hands to draw it,—there being an aversion to other carts and horses,—and chip dirt far away. Fellow-travellers as they rattled by compared it aloud with the fields which they had passed, so that I came to know how I stood in the agricultural world. This was one field not in Mr. Coleman's report. And, by the way, who estimates the value of the crop which Nature yields in the still wilder fields unimproved by man? The crop of *English* hay is carefully weighed, the moisture calculated, the silicates and the potash; but in all dells and pond holes in the woods and pastures and swamps grows a rich and various crop only unreaped by man. Mine was, as it were, the connecting link between wild and cultivated fields; as some states are civilized, and others half-civilized, and others savage or barbarous, so my field was, though not in a bad sense, a half-cultivated field. They were beans cheerfully returning to their wild and primitive state that I cultivated, and my hoe played the *Ranz des Vaches* for them."

Even the baking of bread is not so simple as it had seemed, but he takes his own line and learns even where he appears to lose: —

"Bread I at first made of pure Indian meal and salt, genuine hoe-cakes, which I baked before my fire out of doors on a shingle or the end of a stick of timber sawed off in building my house; but it was wont to get smoked and to have a piny flavor. I tried flour also; but have at last found a mixture of rye and Indian meal most convenient and agreeable. In cold weather it was no little amusement to bake several small loaves of this in succession, tending and turning them as carefully as an Egyptian his hatching eggs. They were a real cereal fruit which I ripened, and they had to my senses a fragrance like that of other noble fruits, which I kept in as long as possible by wrapping them in cloths. I made a study of the ancient and indispensable art of bread-making, consulting such authorities as offered, going back to the primitive days and first invention of the unleavened kind, when from the wildness of nuts and meats men first reached the mildness and refinement of this diet, and travelling gradually down in my studies through that accidental souring of the dough which, it is supposed, taught the leavening process, and through the various fermentations thereafter, till I came to 'good, sweet, wholesome bread,' the staff of life. Leaven.

which some deem the soul of bread, the *spiritus* which fills its cellular tissue, which is religiously preserved like the vestal fire,—some precious bottle-full, I suppose, first brought over in the *Mayflower* did the business for America, and its influence is still rising, swelling, spreading, in cerealian billows over the land,— this seed I regularly and faithfully procured from the village, till at length one morning I forgot the rules, and scalded my yeast, by which accident I discovered that even this was not indispensable,—for my discoveries were not by the synthetic but analytic process,—and I have gladly omitted it since, though most housewives earnestly assured me that safe and wholesome bread without yeast might not be, and elderly people prophesied a speedy decay of the vital forces. Yet I find it not to be an essential ingredient, and, after going without it for a year, am still in the land of the living; and I am glad to escape the trivialness of carrying a bottleful in my pocket, which would sometimes pop and discharge its contents to my discomfiture. It is simpler and more respectable to omit it. Man is an animal who, more than any other, can adapt himself to all climates and circumstances. Neither did I put any sal-soda, or other acid or alkali, into my bread. It would seem that I made it according to the recipe which Marcus Porcius Cato gave about two centuries before Christ: 'Panem depsticium

sic facito. Manus mortariumque bene lavato. Farjnam in mortarium indito, aquæ paulatim addito, subigitoque pulchre. Ubi bene subegeris, deinguito, coquitoque sub testu.' Which I take to mean.— 'Make kneaded bread thus. Wash your hands and trough well. Put the meal into the trough, add water gradually, and knead it thoroughly. When you have kneaded it well, mould it, and bake it under a cover,' that is, in a baking-kettle. Not a word about leaven. But I did not always use this staff of life. At one time, owing to the emptiness of my purse, I saw none of it for more than a month."

Having now but few human companions, in the shape of occasional visitors, — Emerson, one of his nearest neighbors, amongst them, — he honestly tried what the lower creatures could do for him. And soon he and they were on the most intimate terms. The fishes came, as it seemed, into his hand if he but dipped it in the stream; the mice would come and playfully eat out of his fingers, and the very mole paid him friendly visits; sparrows alighted on his shoulder at his call, phœbes built in his shed; and the wild partridge with her brood came and fed quietly beneath his window as he sat and looked at them. He himself has thus celebrated his first domestic companions in Walden: —

"The mice which haunted my house were not the

common ones, which are said to have been introduced into the country, but a wild native kind not found in the village. I sent one to a distinguished naturalist, and it interested him much. When I was building, one of these had its nest underneath the house, and before I had laid the second floor, and swept out the shavings, would come out regularly at lunch time and pick up the crumbs at my feet. It probably had never seen a man before; and it soon became quite familiar, and would run over my shoes and up my clothes. It could readily ascend the sides of the room by short impulses, like a squirrel, which it resembled in its motions. At length, as I leaned with my elbow on the bench one day, it ran up my clothes, and along my sleeve, and round and round the paper which held my dinner, while I kept the latter close, and dodged and played at bo-peep with it; and when at last I held still a piece of cheese between my thumb and finger, it came and nibbled it, sitting in my hand, and afterward cleaned its face and paws, like a fly, and walked away.

"A phœbe soon built in my shed, and a robin for protection in a pine which grew against the house. In June the partridge (*Tetrao umbellas*), which is so shy a bird, led her brood past my windows, from the woods in the rear to the front of my house, clucking and calling to them like a hen, and in all her

behavior proving herself the hen of the woods. The young suddenly disperse on your approach, at a signal from the mother, as if a whirlwind had swept them away; and they so exactly resemble the dried leaves and twigs that many a traveller has placed his foot in the midst of a brood, and heard the whir of the old bird as she flew off, and her anxious calls and mewing, or seen her trail her wings to attract his attention, without suspecting their neighborhood. The parent will sometimes roll and spin round before you in such a déshabille, that you cannot, for a few moments, detect what kind of creature it is. The young squat still and flat, often running their heads under a leaf, and mind only their mother's directions given from a distance, nor will your approach make them run again and betray themselves. You may even tread on them, or have your eyes on them for a minute, without discovering them. I have held them in my open hand at such a time, and still their only care, obedient to their mother and their instinct, was to squat there without fear or trembling. So perfect is this instinct that once, when I had laid them on the leaves again, and one accidentally fell on its side, it was found with the rest in exactly the same position ten minutes afterwards. They are not callow like the young of most birds, but more fully developed and precocious even than chickens. The remarkably adult yet innocent expression of their

open and serene eyes is very memorable. All intelligence seems reflected in them. They suggest not merely the purity of infancy, but a wisdom clarified by experience. Such an eye was not born when the bird was, but is coeval with the sky it reflects. The woods do not yield such another gem. The traveller does not often look into such a limpid well. The ignorant or reckless sportsman often shoots the parent at such a time, and leaves these innocents to fall a prey to some prowling beast or bird, or gradually mingle with the decaying leaves which they so much resemble. It is said that when hatched by a hen they will directly disperse on some alarm, and so are lost, for they never hear the mother's call which gathers them again. These were my hens and chickens.

"It is remarkable how many creatures live wild and free, though secret, in the woods, and still sustain themselves in the neighborhood of towns, suspected by hunters only. How retired the otter manages to live here! He grows to be four feet long, as big as a small boy, perhaps without any human being getting a glimpse of him. I formerly saw the raccoon in the woods behind where my house is built, and probably still heard their whinnering at night. Commonly I rested an hour or two in the shade at noon, after planting, and ate my lunch, and read a little by a spring which was the source of a swamp and of a brook, ooz-

ing from under Brister's Hill, half a mile from my field. The approach to this was through a succession of descending grassy hollows full of young pitch pines into a larger wood about the swamp. Here, in a very secluded and shaded spot, under a spreading white-pine, there was yet a clean firm sward to sit on. I had dug out the spring and made a well of clear gray water, where I could dip up a pailful without soiling it, and thither I went for this purpose almost every day in midsummer, when the pond was warmest. Thither, too, the wood-cock led her brood, to probe the mud for worms, flying but a foot above them down the bank, while they ran in a troop beneath; but at last, spying me, she would leave her young and circle round and round me, nearer and nearer till within four or five feet, pretending broken wings and legs, to attract my attention, and get off her young, who would already have taken up their march, with faint wiry peep, single file through the swamp, as she directed. Or I heard the peep of the young when I could not see the parent bird. There, too, the turtle-doves sat over the spring, or fluttered from bough to bough of the soft white pines over my head; or the red squirrel, coursing down the nearest bough, was particularly familiar and inquisitive. You only need sit still long enough in some attractive spot in the woods that all its inhabitants may exhibit themselves to you by turns."

He draws his brute friends towards him as if by secret magnetic attractions, and never seems to fail in the long run in finding what he seeks. One of his friends has given an almost ludicrous account of his helpless endeavors to free himself from the society of a squirrel of a peculiar species which he had taken for a time in order to observe its habits and mode of movement. More than once he conveyed the little creature to the tree from which he had taken it, but it immediately returned to his hand, sat there, and declined to betake itself to its old haunts, at length hiding its head in the folds of his waistcoat; a demonstration that he could not resist. He therefore marched his pet back to the hut.

This is quite as marvellous and quite as touching as some of the stories told of St. Francis. One day, we read a live leveret was brought to him. His gentle heart was moved to pity, and he said, "Little brother leveret, come to me;" and although he desired the creature to escape, it always returned and nestled in the cloak of the loving Father. The same story is told of a wild rabbit. "It still returned," says his biographer, Bonaventura, "into the Father's bosom, as if it had some hidden sense of the pitifulness of his heart."

"Thoreau's intimacy with animals," says another friend, "suggested what Thomas Fuller records of

Butler, the apiologist, that 'either he had told the bees things, or the bees had told him.'" And this friend avouches that "snakes coiled round his leg; that fishes swam into his hand, and he took them out of the water;" that he "pulled the woodchuck out of its hole by the tail, and took the foxes under his protection from the hunters." Nathaniel Hawthorne, in one of his Note-books, tells us that his first hint of Donatello, in "The Marble Faun," was derived from these attractions and half-animal instincts of Thoreau.

And the more intimate Thoreau grows with his brute friends the more his respect and love for them rises. He writes, "If we take the age into account, may there not be a civilization going on among brutes as well as men? They seem to me to be rudimental, burrowing men, still standing on their defence, awaiting their transformation."

We are fully aware that not a few will be inclined summarily to dismiss our claims for some special sympathetic power in Thoreau by saying that his influence was simply magnetic; and will remind us that in their youth they had "tickled trout," and so on. To this we should be inclined to reply that, if magnetic attraction accounts for anything in Thoreau, sympathy and patience and spiritual discernment count for far more. The power to 'tickle trout' is not uncommon, but Thoreau's affinities and friendships with animals were

not limited to that achievement; he himself claimed that it was a fully realized and active sense of brotherhood that gave him any command he had over the lower creatures.

Notice too how entirely different is Thoreau's feeling for the dumb creatures from that which animates the common pet-keeper, who almost seems to aim at destroying the true brute nature, and the dim rudimentary humanity along with it, in order to make them little less than 'snobs.' Thoreau, instead of being in reactionary divorce from man, loves the animals because they are manlike, and seem to yearn toward human forms. And to him even inanimate nature looks manward in its constancies, if in nothing else. What a glimpse this passage from Mr. Channing gives us of the man: —

"Thoreau named all the birds without a gun, a weapon he never used in mature years. He neither killed nor imprisoned any animal, unless driven by acute needs. He brought home a flying squirrel, to study its mode of flight, but quickly carried it back to the wood. He possessed true instincts of topography, and could conceal choice things in the bush and find them again; unlike Gall, who commonly lost his locality and himself, as he tells us, when in the wood, master as he was in playing on the organ. If Thoreau needed a box in his walk, he would strip a

piece of birch bark off the tree, fold it, when cut straightly, together, and put his tender lichen or brittle creature therein."

And, naturally nothing afforded him more delight than to observe the graceful prudence of animals. The shifts to which he had often to put himself to achieve this knowledge without cruelty perhaps did more than aught else to develop in him his wonderful, half-animal sagacities. Mr. Emerson says:—

"It was a pleasure and a privilege to walk with him. He knew the country like a fox or a bird, and passed through it freely by paths of his own. Under his arm he carried an old music-book to press plants; in his pocket his diary and pencil, a spy-glass for birds, microscope, jack-knife, and twine. . . . The naturalist waded into the pool for the water-plants, and his strong legs were no insignificant part of his armor. On this day he looked for the menyanthes and detected it across the wide pool; and, on examination of the floret, declared that it had been in flower five days. He drew out of his breast-pocket a diary, and read the names of all the plants that should bloom that day, whereof he kept account as a banker does when his notes fall due: 'The Cypripedium not due till tomorrow.' He thought that, if waked up from a trance in this swamp, he could tell by the plants what time of the year it was within two days. The redstart was

flying about, and presently the fine grosbeaks, whose brilliant scarlet makes the rash gazer wipe his eye, and whose fine clear note Thoreau compared to that of a tanager which has got rid of its hoarseness. Presently he heard a note which he called that of the night-warbler, a bird he had never identified, had been in search of twelve years, which always, when he saw it, was in the act of diving down into a tree or bush, and which it was vain to seek; the only bird that sings indifferently by night and by day. I told him he must beware of finding and booking it, lest life should have nothing more to show him. He said, 'What you seek in vain for half your life, one day you come full upon all the family at dinner. You seek it like a dream, and as soon as you find it, you become its prey.' His power of observation seemed to indicate additional senses. He saw as with a microscope, heard as with an ear-trumpet, and his memory was a photographic register of all he saw and heard. He once remarked that by night every dwelling-house gives out a bad air, like a slaughter-house. . . . And yet none knew better than he that it is not the fact that imports but the impression or effect of the fact on the mind. . . . His interest in the flower or the bird lay very deep in his mind, was connected with Nature, and the meaning of Nature was never attempted to be defined by him. . . . Our natur-

alist had perfect magnanimity; he had no secrets; he would carry you to the heron's haunt, or even to his most prized botanical swamp,—possibly knowing that you could never find it again, yet willing to take his risks. . . . He could pace rods more accurately than another man could measure them with rod and chain. He could find his way in the woods at night better by his feet than by his eyes. He knew every track in the snow and on the ground, and what creature had taken the path in the snow before him."

We have this further hint of a point in his method from another hand:—

"He ascended such hills as Monadnock or Saddleback Mountains by his own path, and would lay down his map on the summit and draw a line to the point he proposed to visit below, perhaps forty miles away in the landscape, and set off bravely to make 'the short cut.' The lowland people wondered to see him scaling the heights as if he had lost his way, or at his 'jumping over their cow-yard fences,' asking if he had fallen from the clouds."

Mr. Channing thus aptly supplements Mr. Emerson's report:—

"Alpine and sea plants he admired, besides those of his own village; of the latter, he mostly attended willows, golden-rods, asters, polygonums, sedges, and grasses; fungi and lichens he somewhat affected. He

was accustomed to date the day of the month by the appearance of certain flowers, and thus visited special plants for a series of years, in order to form an average; as his white-thorn by Tarbell's Spring, 'Good for tomorrow, if not for today.' The bigness of noted trees, the number of rings, the degree of branching by which their age may be drawn; the larger forests, such as that princely 'Inches Oak-Wood,' in West Acton, or Wetherbee's patch, he paid attention to."

Another of Thoreau's trusted friends gives us this glimpse of him in congenial circumstances; that is, amongst the children and students who, in spite of what some critics would have us to regard as his morbidity and brusqueness and repulsive bluntness, came great distances to spend their holiday with him in his retreat:—

"Sometimes I have gone with Thoreau and his young comrades for an expedition on the river, to gather, it may be, water-lilies. Upon such excursions, his resources for our entertainment were inexhaustible. He would tell stories of the Indians who once dwelt thereabout, until the children almost looked to see a red man skulking with his arrow on the shore; and every plant or flower on the bank or in the water, and every fish, turtle, frog, lizard about us, was transformed by the wand of his knowledge from the low form into which the spell of our ignorance had reduced

it into a mystic beauty. One of his surprises was to thrust his head softly into the water, and as softly raise up before our astonished eyes a large bright fish, which lay as contentedly in his hand as if they were old acquaintances. If the fish had also dropped a penny from its mouth, *it could not have been a more miraculous proceeding to us.* We could not then get his secret from him.

And indeed the secret, as we guess, was not a communicable one under any conditions. That he raised the fish before the eyes of the astonished group was a fact, but a full explanation of it would probably have been more hard for Thoreau than the feat itself.

"One of the weapons with which he conquered all obstacles in science was patience," says Emerson. He knew how to sit immovable as part of the rock he rested on, until the bird, the reptile, the fish, which had retired from him should come back, and resume its habits, — nay, moved by curiosity, should come to him and watch him." The incident of his Walden life which pleased him most, and which he was wont to repeat with some pride to his more intimate friends, was that, after he had been two or three months in the woods, the wild birds ceased to be afraid of him, and would come and perch upon his shoulder, and sometimes upon his spade, when he was digging in the little patch that supplied him with potatoes. He

deemed the honor thus bestowed upon him by the birds to be greater than anything an emperor could have conferred, if he had elevated him to a dukedom.

Thoreau's main purpose was to exhibit the points where animal instinct and resource meet human affection and virtue to illustrate each other. The following is certainly well worth quoting in this light: —

"Man conceitedly names the intelligence and industry of animals instinct, and overlooks their wisdom and fitness of behavior. I saw where the squirrels had carried off the ears of corn, more than twenty rods from the corn-field, to the woods. A little further on, beyond Hubbard's Brook, I saw a gray squirrel, with an ear of yellow corn a foot long, sitting on the fence fifteen rods from the field. He dropped the corn but continued to sit on the rail, where I could hardly see him, it being of the same color with himself, which I have no doubt he was well aware of. He next went to a red maple, where his policy was to conceal himself behind the stem, hanging perfectly still there till I passed, his fur being exactly the color of the bark. When I struck the tree and tried to frighten him, he knew better than to run to the next tree, there being no continuous row by which he might escape; but he merely fled higher up, and put so many leaves between us that it was difficult to discover him. When I threw up a stick to frighten him, he disappeared

entirely, though I kept the best watch I could and stood close to the foot of the tree.

"They *are* wonderfully cunning!"

Busy men and women — dwellers in cities, people of society, who make the lower creatures practically serviceable — do undoubtedly, in their passion for discipline and order in horses, dogs, and the rest, come to regard animal life as something so dependent on human character and effort as to deprive it of all real individual interest. "I have often thought," says Mr. Hamerton, "in noticing the stupid and cruel way in which animals are treated, — the almost constant habit of using them merely as things, and not as if they had the feelings and character of individual beings, — that we have other servants besides human ones, who deserve more consideration than they get." Against this tendency Thoreau testified, just as he testified unremittingly to the sacredness of human individuality. Science itself — as generally understood — does not help us here, but rather comes in to confirm the artificial notion by absorbing the individual in the class, — the species, the genus, the order. An overpressed and over-cultivated social life, leaning on science, thus finally inflicts injury on itself by narrowing its sources of true interest, and owes gratitude to the men who honestly recall it to Nature, — to the Wordsworths, the Bewicks, the Thoreaus, the Blackburns.

A face-to-face and daily intercourse with her, in seeking traces of the dim human instincts which she seems to shroud so strangely even in her most worthless productions, is a supremely healthy occupation or pastime, since it develops sympathy in enforcing the idea that some ordinances of Nature that man deems harsh may, after all, have a reference to wise and beautiful races other than human. And this has the best concurrence of Scripture. "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His permission." With Thoreau animals were rudimentary men; and their human aspect was that preeminently in which their individuality stood revealed. On this ground it was that he based their right to freedom, to toleration, and to a healthier regard in their domesticated condition. Very significant in this light is a noble passage on the horse, — the reader will see that the whole soul of Thoreau speaks in it: —

"I saw a man a few days since working by the river with a horse carting dirt, and the horse and his relations to him struck me as very remarkable. There was the horse, a mere animated machine, though his tail was brushing off the flies, his whole condition subordinated to the man's, with no tradition (perhaps no instinct) in him of a time when he was wild and free, completely humanized. No contract had been made with him that he should have the Saturday afternoons

or the Sundays, or any holidays, his independence never being recognized; it being now quite forgotten, both by man and horse that the horse was ever free. For I am not aware that there are any wild horses known surely not to be descended from tame ones. He was assisting that man to pull down that bank and spread it over the meadow, only keeping off the flies with his tail, and stamping and catching a mouthful of grass or leaves from time to time on his own account: all the rest for man. It seemed hardly worth while that he should be animated for this. *It was plain that the man was not educating the horse, not trying to develop his nature, but merely getting work out of him.*—

'Extremes are counted worst of all.'

The mass of animated matter seemed more completely the servant of man than any inanimate. For slaves have *their* holidays; a heaven is conceded to them (such as it is); but to the horse none. Now and forever he is man's slave. *The more I considered, the more the man seemed akin to the horse*, only his *will was the stronger of the two;* for a little further on I saw an Irishman shovelling, who evidently was as much tamed as the horse. He had stipulated that a certain amount of his independence be recognised; and yet he was really but a little more independent. *What is a horse but an animal that has lost its*

liberty? and has man got any more liberty for having robbed the horse? or has he just lost as much of his own, and become more like the horse he has robbed? Is not the other end of the bridle, too, coiled around his neck? Hence stable boys, jockeys, and all that class that are daily transported by fast horses. There he stood with his oblong, square figure (his tail mostly sawed off), seen against the water, brushing off the flies with his stump braced back, while the man was filling the cart.

> 'The ill that's wisely feared is half withstood,
> He will redeem our deadly, drooping state.'

"I regard the horse as a human being in a humble state of existence. Virtue is not left to stand alone. He who practices it will have neighbors."

Any one who knows animals knows that a horse has as much individuality as a man. And the more we know even of inferior animals, the more distinct does their individuality become for us. It was from this point of view that Thoreau always wrote of the domestic animals, regretful of the despite done to that which is *special* in them. Never, perhaps, were the claims of the horse, and indirectly of all the domestic animals, more powerfully put than in the passage we have just given, in which we have disclosed to us clearly the point at which, with Thoreau, the mystery of man's life touched that of animal life, and raised it up to nearly

equal interest, only, however, to increase tenfold the meaning and wonder of that to which it is allied.

With Thoreau, as with St. Francis, as we have said, the sympathy felt for animals is constantly justified by a reference to a dim but real brotherhood. The brute creatures are 'undeveloped men;' they await their transformation, stand on their defence; and it is very easy to see that inseparably bound up with this view, there are certain elements of mysticism — common to the early saint and the American 'hut-builder.' Nay, there is more that is common to them, — the capability to deal decisively with authority when it conflicts with interior development, as seen in St. Francis's revolt against his parent's wishes for him, and the excessive honesty which would not tolerate the appearance of virtue or of self denial where it did not exist. We read of St. Francis: —

"When he was sick and ill he was counselled by one of the brethren to have a fox's skin sewn inside his frock, to ease him a little with its warmth and softness. Francis was too reasonable even in his asceticism to refuse so natural a comfort; but he had another put outside that he might not have the reputation of greater severity than he actually practised."

This is precisely as we should have expected Thoreau to act had he ever been advised to assume any secret comfort. He would, like St. Francis, have set up an

unmistakable outward sign of the hidden fact; for the *appearance* of dishonesty or the affectation of virtue was hateful to him.

A further likeness might well be found in the faith both had in the reforming and purifying power of useful daily work: —

"The lukewarm," said St. Francis, "and those who do not work sincerely and humbly, will be rejected by God. I desire that all my brethren should labor at useful occupations, that we may be less of a burden to the people, and also that we may be less subject to maladies of the heart and tongue, and may not be tempted to evil thoughts or evil speaking. Those who cannot work, let them learn to work. As for the profit of the work, it must not remain at the disposal of the earner but at the will of the superior."

It was whilst Thoreau was still resident at Walden, in 1846, that he made his first journey to the backwoods of Maine, which he followed up by two later visits, — the second in 1853 and the third in 1857. The record of these visits he has given in his volume "The Maine Woods," which is characterised by all his grace of style, his eye for beautiful pictures, and his faculty of finding points of interest in the Indians whose society and aid he had sought. Indeed, it was

chiefly with the view of extending his knowledge of the Indians and their arts that these journeys to the Maine woods were undertaken. His ready sympathy with them, and his management of them, is specially noticeable. Their natural reserve was overcome so far that they readily let him into most of their methods so far as they were themselves able to explain them, — which was not always the case, as we shall immediately see. Thus he describes his first introduction to those who were to be his guides in the wilderness: —

"The next morning we drove along through a high and hilly country, in view of Cold-stream Pond, a beautiful lake four or five miles long, and came into the Houlton road again, here called the Military road, at Lincoln, forty-five miles from Bangor, where there is quite a village for this country, the principal one above Oldtown. Learning that there were several wigwams here on one of the Indian islands, we left our horse and wagon and walked through the forest half a mile to the river, to procure a guide to the mountain. It was not until considerable search that we discovered their habitations, — small huts, in a retired place, where the scenery was unusually soft and beautiful, and the shore skirted with pleasant meadows and graceful elms. We paddled ourselves across to the island-side in a canoe, which we found on the shore. Near where we landed sat an Indian girl ten

or twelve years old, on a rock in the water in the sun washing and humming, or moaning a song meanwhile. It was an aboriginal strain. A salmon-spear, made wholly of wood, lay on the shore, such as they might have used before white men came. It had an elastic piece of wood fastened to one side of its point, which slipped over and closed upon the fish, somewhat like the contrivance for holding a bucket at the end of a well-pole. As we walked up to the nearest house, we were met by a sally of a dozen wolfish-looking dogs, which may have been lineal descendants from the ancient Indian dogs, which the first *voyageurs* describe as 'their wolves.' I suppose they were. The occupant soon appeared, with a long pole in his hand, with which he beat off the dogs, while he parleyed with us,—a stalwart, but dull and greasy-looking fellow, who told us in his sluggish way in answer to our questions, as if it were the first serious business he had to do that day, that there *were* Indians going 'up river,' he and one other—today, before noon. 'And who was the other?' 'Louis Neptune, who lives in the next house.' 'Well let us go over and see Louis together.' The same doggish reception, and Louis Neptune makes his appearance,—a small wiry man, with puckered and wrinkled face, yet he seemed the chief man of the two; the same as I remembered, who had accompanied Jackson to the mountain in 1837.

The same questions were put to Louis, and the same information obtained, while the other Indian stood by. It appeared that they were going to start by noon, with two canoes, to go up Chesuncook to hunt moose, to be gone a month. 'Well, Louis, suppose you get to the Point' (to the Five Islands just below Mattawam Reach) 'to camp; we walk upon the West Branch tomorrow — four of us, and wait for you at the dam, on this side. You overtake us to-morrow or next day, and take us into your canoes. We stop for you, you stop for us. We pay you for your trouble.' 'Ye!' replied Louis; 'maybe you carry some provisions for all,— some pork, some bread, and so pay?' He said, 'We sure get some moose.' And when I asked if he thought Pomola would let us go up, he answered that we must plant one bottle of rum on the top; he had planted a good many; and when he looked again they were all gone. He had been up two or three times; he had planted letter,—English, German, French, etc. These men were slightly clad in shirt and pantaloons, like laborers with us in warm weather. They did not invite us into their houses, but met us outside. So we left the Indians, thinking ourselves lucky to have secured such guides and companions."

His picture of the primitive wilderness is, as we think the reader will admit, penetrated by the very spirit of the forest:—

"What is most striking in the Maine Wilderness is the continuousness of the forest, with fewer open intervals of glades than you imagined. Except the few burnt lands, the narrow intervals of rivers, the bare tops of the high mountains, and the lakes and streams, the forest is uninterrupted. It is even more grim and wild than you had anticipated, a damp and intricate wilderness, in the spring everywhere wet and miry. The aspect of the country, indeed, is universally stern and savage, excepting the distant views of the forest from hills, and the lake prospects, which are mild and civilizing in a degree. The lakes are something which you are unprepared for; they lie up so high, exposed to the light, and the forest is diminished to a fine fringe on their edges, with here and there a blue mountain, like amethyst jewels set around some jewel of the first water,—so anterior, so superior to all the changes that are to take place on their shores, even now civil and refined, and fair as they can ever be. These are not the artificial forests of an English king, a royal preserve merely. Here prevail no forest laws but those of nature. The aborigines have never been dispossessed, nor Nature disforested.

"It is a country full of evergreen trees, of mossy silver birches and watery maples, the ground dotted with insipid, small red berries, and strewn with damp and moss-grown rocks, a country diversified with innu-

merable lakes and rapid streams, peopled with trout, and various species of *leuciscí*, with salmon, shad, and pickerel and other fishes; the forest resounding at rare intervals with the note of the chickadee, the blue jay, and the wood-pecker, the scream of the fish-hawk and the eagle, the laugh of the loon, and the whistle of ducks along the solitary streams; at night, with the hooting of owls and howling of wolves; in summer, swarming with myriads of black flies and mosquitoes, more formidable than wolves to the white man. Such is the home of the moose, the bear, the caribou, the wolf, the beaver, and the Indian. Who shall describe the inexpressible tenderness and immortal life of the grim forest, where Nature, though it be mid-winter, is ever in her spring, where the moss-growing and decaying trees are not old, but seem to enjoy a perpetual youth; and blissful, innocent Nature, like a serene infant, is too happy to make a noise, except by a few tinkling, lisping birds and trickling rills?

"What a place to live, what a place to die and be buried in! There certainly men would live for ever, and laugh at death and the grave. There they could have no such thoughts as are associated with the village graveyard,—that make a grave out of those moist evergreen hammocks!

> **Die and be buried who will,**
> **I mean to live here still;**
> **My nature grows evermore young,**
> **The primitive pines among."**

He watches for the impressions produced by the leading sounds of the forest, and records with real poetic skill the most striking of them, as in this paragraph: —

"In the middle of the night, as indeed each time that we lay on the shore of a lake, we heard the voice of the loon, loud and distinct, from far over the lake. It is a very wild sound, quite in keeping with the place and circumstances of the traveller, and very unlike the voice of a bird. I could lie awake for hours listening to it, it is so thrilling. When camping in such a wilderness as this, you are prepared to hear sounds from some of its inhabitants which will give voice to its wildness, — some idea of bears, wolves, or panthers runs in your head naturally; and when this note is first heard very far off at midnight, as you lie with your ear to the ground, the forest being perfectly still about you, you take it for granted that it is the voice of a wolf or some other wild beast, for only the last part is heard when at a distance, — you conclude that it is a pack of wolves baying the moon, or, perchance, cantering after a moose. Strange as it may seem, the 'mooing' of a cow on a mountain-side comes nearest to my idea of the voice of a bear; and this bird's note resembled that. It was the unfailing and characteristic sound of these lakes. We were not so lucky as to hear wolves howl, though that

is an occasional serenade. Some friends of mine, who two years ago went up the Caucomgomoc River, were serenaded by wolves while moose-hunting by moonlight. It was a sudden burst as if a hundred demons had broke loose, a startling sound enough, which, if any, would make your hair stand on end; and all was still again. It lasted but a moment, and you'd have thought there were twenty of them, when probably there were only two or three. They heard it twice only, and they said that it gave expression to the wilderness which it lacked before. . . . This of the loon — I do not mean its laugh, but its looning — is a long-drawn call, as it were, something singularly human to my ear, hoo-hoo-ooooo, like the halooing of a man, in a very high key, having thrown his voice into his head."

The abundance of life in the wilderness is also celebrated, and accounts of hunting and fishing are eloquently given. He prefers fishing to hunting, and furnishes this account of the latter:—

"We had been told by McCauslin that here we should find trout enough; so, while some prepared the camp, the rest fell to fishing. Seizing the birch poles which some party of Indians or white hunters had left on the shore, and baiting our hooks with pork and with trout, as soon as they were caught, we cast our lines into the mouth of the Aboljacknagesic, a clear, swift,

shallow stream, which came in from Ktaadn. Instantly a shoal of white chivin (*Leucisci pulchelli*), silvery roaches, cousin-trout, or what not, large and small, prowling thereabouts, fell upon our bait, and one after another were landed amidst the bushes. Anon their cousins, the true trout, took their turn, and alternately the speckled trout and the silvery roaches swallowed the bait as fast as we could throw in; and the finest specimens of both that I have ever seen, the largest one weighing three pounds, were heaved upon the shore, though at first in vain, to wriggle down into the water again, for we stood in the boat. But soon we learned to remedy this evil; for one who had lost his hook stood on the shore to catch them as they fell in a perfect shower around him, sometimes wet and slippery, full in his face and bosom, as his arms were outstretched to receive them. While yet alive, before their tints had faded, they glistened like the fairest flowers, the product of primitive rivers; and he could hardly trust his senses, as he stood over them, that these jewels should have swung away in the Aboljacknagesic waters for so long, so many dark ages, — these bright fluviatile flowers seen of Indians only, made beautiful, the Lord only knows why, to swim there! I could understand better for this the truth of mythology, the fables of Proteus, and all those beautiful sea-monsters, — how all history, indeed, put to a

terrestrial use is mere history, but put to a celestial is mythology always. . .

"In the night I dreamed badly of trout fishing; and when at length I woke, it seemed a fable that this painted fish swam so near my couch, and rose to our hooks the last evening, and I doubted if I had not dreamed it all. So I rose before the dawn to test its truth, while my companions were still sleeping. There stood Ktaadn with distinct and cloudless outline in the moonlight; and the rippling of the rapids was the only sound to break the stillness. Standing on the shore, I once more cast my line into the stream, and found the dream to be real, and the fable true. The speckled trout and silvery roach, like flying fish, sped swiftly through the moonlight air, describing bright arcs on the dark side of Ktaadn, until moonlight, now fading into daylight, brought satiety to my mind and the mind of my companions, who had joined me."

With 'Joe,' his favorite, he goes on special adventures, and then, in favorable moments, gains his confidence, as we find in this passage:—

"I asked him how he guided himself in the woods. 'Oh,' said he, 'I can tell a good many ways.' When I pressed him further, he answered, 'Sometimes I lookum side hill,' and he glanced toward a high hill or mountain on the eastern shore,—'great difference between the north and the south, see where the sun

has shone most. So trees,—the large limbs bend towards south. Sometimes I lookum locks (rocks).' I asked what he saw on the rocks, but he did not describe anything in particular, answering vaguely, in a mysterious or drawling tone. 'Bare locks on lake shore, great difference between N. S. E. W. side, —can tell what le sun has shone on.' 'Suppose,' said I, 'that I should take you in a dark night right up here into the middle of the woods a hundred miles, set you down, and turn you round quickly twenty times, could you steer straight to Oldtown?' 'Oh, yes,' said he, 'have done pretty much same thing. I will tell you. Some years ago I met an old white hunter at Millinocket; very good hunter. He said he could go anywhere in the woods. He wanted to hunt with me that day, so we start. We chase a moose all the forenoon, round and round, till middle of afternoon, when we kill him. Then I said to him, 'Now you go straight to camp. Don't go round and round where we've been, but go straight.' He said, 'I can't do that, I don't know where I am.' 'Where you think camp?' I asked. He pointed so. Then I laugh at him. I take the lead, and go right off the other way, cross our tracks many times, straight camp.' 'How do you do that?' asked I. 'Oh, I can't tell you,' he replied; 'great difference between me and white man.'

"It appeared as if the sources of information were so various that he did not give a distinct, conscious attention to any one, and so could not really refer to any when questioned about it, but he found his way very much as an animal does. Perhaps what is commonly called instinct in the animal in this case is merely a sharpened and educated sense. . . . The white hunter, with whom I talked in the stage, knew some of the resources of the Indian. He said he steered by the wind, or by the limbs of hemlock, which were largest on the north side; also, sometimes when he knew there was a lake near, by firing his gun, and listening to hear the distance and direction of the echo from it."

The Indian plan of crossing lakes in a canoe he thus indicates, as well as the method of carrying canoes, in which he is particularly interested, and enthusiastically praises:—

"The following will suffice for a common experience in crossing lakes in a canoe. As the forenoon advanced, the wind increased. The last bay which we crossed, before reaching the desolate pier at the north-east carry, was two or three miles over, and the wind was south-westerly. After going a third of the way, the waves had increased so as occasionally to wash into the canoe, and we knew that it was worse and worse ahead. At first we might have turned about, but

were not willing to. It would have been of no use to follow the course of the shore, for not only the distance would have been much greater, but the waves ran still higher there on account of the great sweep the wind had. At any rate, it would have been dangerous now to alter our course, because the waves would have struck us at an advantage. It will not do to meet them at right-angles, for then they will wash in both sides; but you must take them quartering. So the Indian stood up in the canoe, and exerted all his skill and strength for a mile or two, while I paddled right along in order to give him more steerage way. For more than a mile he did not allow a single wave to strike the canoe as it would, but turned it quickly from this side to that, so that it would always be on or near the crest of a wave when it broke, where all its force was spent, and we merely settled down with it. At length I jumped out on to the end of the pier, against which the waves were dashing violently, in order to lighten the canoe and catch it at the landing, which was not much sheltered; but, just as I jumped, we took in two or three gallons of water. I remarked to the Indian, 'You managed that well;' to which he replied: 'Yer' few men do that. Great many waves; when I look out for one, another come quick.'"

"While the Indian went to get cedar bark, etc., to carry his canoe with, we cooked dinner on the shore,

at this end of the carry, in the midst of a sprinkling rain.

"He prepared his canoe for carrying in this wise: he took a cedar shingle or splint eighteen inches long and four or five wide, rounded at one end, that the corners might not be in the way, and tied it with cedar bark by two holes, made midway, near the edge on each side, to the middle cross-bar of the canoe. When the canoe was lifted upon his head, bottom up, this shingle, with its rounded end uppermost, distributed the weight over his shoulders and head; while a band of cedar bark, tied to the cross-bar on each side of the shingle, passed round his breast, and another longer one, outside of the last, round his forehead; also a band on each side rail served to steer the canoe and keep it from rocking. He thus carried it with his shoulders, head, breast, forehead, and both hands, as if the upper part of his body were all one hand to clasp and hold it. If you know of a better way, I should like to hear of it. A cedar tree furnished all the gear in this case as it had the wood work of the canoe."

The sight of so many and varied woods suggests a reflection:—

"How far men go for material for their houses! The inhabitants of the most civilized cities, in all ages, send into far, primitive forests, beyond the bounds

of their civilization, where the moose, and the bear, and savage dwell, for their pine boards for ordinary use. And, on the other hand, the savage soon receives from cities iron arrow-points, hatchets, and guns, to point his savageness with.

"The solid and well-defined fir-tops, like sharp and regular spear-heads, black against the sky, gave a peculiar, dark, and sombre look to the forest. The spruce tops have a similar but more rugged outline,—their shafts also merely feathered below. The firs were somewhat oftener regular and dense pyramids. I was struck by this universal spiring upwards of the forest evergreens. The tendency is to slender spiring tops, while they are narrower below. Not only the spruce and fir, but even the arbor vitæ and white pine, unlike the soft, spreading second growth, of which I saw none, all spire upwards, lifting a dense spear-head of cones — spiral, also — to the light and air, at any rate, while their branches struggle after as they may, as Indians lift the ball over the heads of the crowd in their desperate game. In this they resemble grasses, as also palms somewhat. The hemlock is commonly a tent-like pyramid from the ground to its summit."

He saw the manufacture of the bark canoes, and tried his hand not unsuccessfully at managing one in the rapids. The Indian relics he had lighted on in his own haunts made him very curious; but he never

found any one who could initiate him into the secret of the making of the stone arrow-heads; and in his last days, when a young friend was setting out for the Rocky Mountains, Thoreau's charge to him was to find an Indian who could teach him that, saying, "It is well worth a visit to California to learn it."

And yet it is not too much to say that Thoreau's general tendency was rather to undervalue the knowledge that diverts the mind from what lies nearest at hand. In the midst of his severe idealism, which led him to find little value in the object save as it stood in relation to some law, there lay an intense realism, which may be taken for egotism, unless it is seen in relation to the quality which Mr. Emerson signalizes in this paragraph:—

"He noted what repeatedly befell him, that, after receiving from a distance a rare plant, he would presently find the same in his own haunts. And those pieces of good luck which happen only to good players happened to him. One day, walking with a stranger, who inquired where Indian arrow-heads could be found, he replied, 'Everywhere,' and, stooping forward, picked one on the instant from the ground. . . . I think his fancy for referring everything to the meridian of Concord did not grow out of any ignorance or depreciation of other longitudes or latitudes but was rather a playful expression of his convictions

of the indifferency of all places, and that the best place for each is where he stands. He expressed it once in this wise: 'I think nothing is to be hoped from you if this bit of mould under your feet is not sweeter to you to eat than any other in this world.' . . He returned Kane's 'Arctic Voyage' to a friend of whom he had borrowed it with the remark that 'most of the phenomena noted might be observed in Concord.'"*

When once we have come to understand this, such passages as the following do not distract or vex us:—

*Thoreau himself had a theory on the subject, which in more than one point coincided with the view which Professor Williamson has given as explanatory of the appearance of certain Arctic plants at comparatively low levels in Yorkshire. Professor Williamson says, "The only explanation I can suggest supposes that at a later period, when the sub-alpine mountains of the Lake district, and of Scotland, had emerged sufficiently high to reveal the deep gorges descending their flanks, these gorges were filled with glaciers, large masses of which broke away from time to time, and floated southwards and eastwards, as is well known to have been the case. These floating icebergs were unquestionably the instruments in spreading over eastern Yorkshire some of its more superficial drifts and gravels, which originally belonged to the moraines of the glaciers whence the icebergs were detached. I can only conclude that when the period arrived at which some of the uplands of eastern Yorkshire appeared above the waters, some stray icebergs had become stranded upon these newly risen lands and conveyed to them along with these moraine rubbish some of the seeds of the plants in question. How it is that they have survived the increasing warmth of the atmosphere, and the gradual disappearance of all the sub-alpine conditions which usually seem necessary to their healthy life, I am unable to understand, but that they have succeeded in acclimatizing themselves is an obvious fact."

"The eye which can appreciate the naked and absolute beauty of scientific truth is far more rare than that which is attracted by a moral one. Few detect the morality in the former or the science in the latter. . . . He is not a true man of science who does not bring some sympathy to his studies, and expect to learn something by behavior as well as by application. It is childish to rest in mere coincidences, or of partial and extraneous laws. . . . The fact which interests us most is the life of the naturalist. The purest science is still biographical. Nothing will dignify and elevate science while it is sundered from the moral life of its devotee, and he professes another religion than it teaches.

"My friends mistake when they communicate facts to me with so much pains. *Their presence, even their exaggerations and loose statements, are equally good facts for me!* I have no respect for facts except when I would use them, and for the most part I am independent of those which I hear, and can afford to be inaccurate, or in other words, to substitute more present and pressing facts in their place." It is not at all likely that Thoreau had in his mind that remarkable passage near the close of the Fourth Book of the "Excursion;" but any one who will thoughtfully read that passage will see how near he

had come to the experience out of which Wordsworth wrote: —

> "Trust me that, for the instructed, time will come
> When they shall meet no object but may teach
> Some acceptable lesson to their minds
> Of human suffering or human joy.
> *For them shall all things speak of man. They read*
> *Their duties in all forms;* and general laws
> And local accidents, shall tend alike
> To rouse, to urge; and, with the will, confer
> The ability to spread the blessings wide
> Of true philanthropy. The light of love
> Not failing, perseverance from their steps
> Departing not, they shall at length obtain
> The glorious habit by which sense is made
> Subservient still to moral purposes,
> Auxiliar to divine. That change shall clothe
> The naked spirit, ceasing to deplore
> The burthen of existence. *Science then*
> *Shall be a precious visitant; and then,*
> *And only then, be worthy of her name.*"

In all his journeys, Thoreau's pride was to show himself independent of the encumbrances which most men deem necessary. So that these words, written with special reference to his trip to Canada, which he undertook in 1850, and which he has described in his book, "A Yankee in Canada," may be taken to apply to them all: —

"My pack, in fact, was soon made, for I keep a short list of those articles which, from frequent experience, I have found indispensable to the foot traveller; and, when I am about to start, I have only to consult

to be sure that nothing is omitted, and, what is more important, nothing superfluous inserted. Most of my fellow-travellers carried carpet-bags, or valises. Sometimes one had two or three tremendous yellow valises in his clutch, at each hitch of the cars, or if we were going to have another rush for seats; and when there was a rush in earnest — and there were not a few — I would see my man in the crowd, with two or three affectionate lusty fellows pressing close, the strap along each side of his arm, between his shoulder and his valises, which held them tight to his back. I could not help asking in my mind, What so great cause for showing Canada to those valises, when perhaps your very nieces had to stay at home for want of an escort? I should have liked to be present when the custom-house officer came aboard of him, and asked him to declare upon his honor if he had anything but wearing apparel in them. Even the elephant carries but a small trunk on his journeys. The perfection of travelling is to travel without baggage. After considerable reflection and experience, I have concluded that the best bag for a foot-traveller is made with a handkerchief, or, if he study appearances, a piece of stiff brown paper, well tied up, with a fresh piece within to put outside when the first is torn. That is good for both town and country, — a bundle which you can carry literally under your arm, and which

will shrink and swell with its contents. I never found the carpet-bag of equal capacity, which was not a bundle of itself. We styled ourselves the Knights of the Umbrella and the Bundle; for wherever we went, whether to Notre Dame or Mount Royal, or the Champ-de-Mars, to town mayors or the bishop's palace, to the citadel, with a bare-legged Highlander for our escort, or to the Plains of Abraham, to dinner or to bed, the umbrella and the bundle went with us; for we wished to be ready to digress at any moment. We made our haven nowhere in particular, but everywhere where our umbrella and bundle were. It would have been an amusing circumstance if the mayor of one of those cities had politely asked us where we were staying. We could only have answered that we were staying with his Honor for the time being. I was amused when, after our return, some green ones inquired if we found 'it easy to get accommodated;' as if we went abroad to get accommodated, when we can get that at home!"

In this short passage, we may say that he gathers up and summarizes his impressions of Canada and its people: —

"To a traveller from the Old World Canada East may appear like a new country, and its inhabitants like colonists; but to me, coming from New England, and being a very green traveller withal, it appeared as

Normandy itself, and realized much that I had heard of Europe and the Middle Ages. Even the names of the humble Canadian villages affected me as if they had been those of the renowned cities of antiquity. To be told by a habitant when I asked the name of a village in sight that it is *St. Fereole* or *St. Anne*, the *Guardian Angel*, or the *Holy Joseph's;* or of a mountain, that it was *Bélange* or *St. Hyacinthe!* As soon as one leaves the States, these saintly names begin. *St. John* is the first town you stop at (fortunately we did not see it), and thenceforward the names of the mountains, and streams, and villages reel, if I may so speak, with the intoxication of poetry: *Chambly*, *Longueuil*, *Pointe aux Trembles*, *Bartholomy*, etc., etc., as if it needed only a little foreign accent, a few more liquids and vowels perchance in the language to make or locate our ideals at once. I began to dream of Provence and the Troubadours, and of places and things which have no existence on the earth. They veiled the Indian and the primitive forest, and the woods towards Hudson's Bay were only as the forests of France and Germany. I could not at once bring myself to believe that the inhabitants who pronounced daily those beautiful, and to me significant, words lead as prosaic lives as we of New England. In short, the Canada which I saw was not

merely a place for railroads to terminate in, and for criminals to run to.

"When I asked a man if there were any falls on the Riviere au Chien — for I saw that it came over the same high bank with the Montmorency and St. Anne — he answered that there were. 'How far?' I inquired. '*Trois quatres lieue.*' 'How high?' '*Je pense, quatre-vingt-dix pieds;*' that is, ninety feet. We turned aside to look at the falls of the *Rivière du Saut à la Puce*, half a mile from the road, which before we had passed in our haste and ignorance, and we pronounced them as beautiful as any that we saw; yet they seemed to make no account of them there, and when first we inquired the way to the falls, directed us to Montmorency, seven miles distant. It was evident that this was the country for waterfalls; that every stream that empties into the St. Lawrence, for some hundreds of miles, must have a great fall or cascade on it, and in its passage through the mountains was for a short distance a small Saguenay, with its upright walls. This fall of La Puce, the least remarkable of the four which we visited in this vicinity, we had never heard of till we came to Canada, and yet, so far as I know, there is nothing of the kind in New England to be compared to it. Most travellers in Canada would not hear of it, though they might go so near as hear it. Since my return I find that in the

topographical description of the country mention is made of 'two or three romantic falls' on this stream, though we saw and heard of but this one. Ask the inhabitants respecting any stream, if there is a fall on it, and they will perchance tell you of something as interesting as Bashpish or the Catskill, which no traveller has ever seen, or, if they have not found it, you may possibly trace up the stream and discover it yourself. Falls there are a 'drug,' and we became quite dissatisfied in respect to them. We had too much of them. Besides those which I have referred to, there are a thousand other falls on the St. Lawrence and its tributaries which I have not seen or heard of; and above all there is one which I have heard of called Niagara, so that I think this river must be the most remarkable for its falls of any in the world.

"At a house near the western boundary of Chateau Richer, whose master was said to speak a very little English, having recently lived at Quebec, we got lodging for the night. As usual we had to go down alone to get round to the south side of the house where the door was, away from the road; for these Canadians' houses have no front door, properly speaking. Every part is for the use of the occupant exclusively, and no part has reference to the traveller or to travel. Every New England house, on the contrary, has a front and a principal door opening to the great world, though it

may be on the cold side, for it stands on the highway of nations, and the road which runs by it comes from the Old World and goes to the far West; but the Canadian's door opens into his back yard and farm alone, and the road which runs behind his house leads only from the church of one saint to that of another. We found a large family — hired men, wife, and children — just eating their supper. They prepared some for us afterwards. The hired men were a merry crew of short, black-eyed fellows, and the wife a thin-faced, sharp-featured French-Canadian woman. Our host's English staggered us rather more than any French we had heard yet; indeed we found that even we spoke better French than he did English, and we concluded that a less crime would be committed, on the whole, if we spoke French with him, and in no respect aided or abetted his attempts to speak English. We had a long and merry chat with the family this Sunday evening in their spacious kitchen. While my companions smoked a pipe and parlez-voused with one party, I parlezed and gesticulated with another. The whole family was enlisted, and I kept a little girl writing what was otherwise unintelligible. The geography getting obscure, we called for chalk, and the greasy, oiled table-cloth having been wiped, — for it needed no French, but only a sentence from the universal language of looks on my part to indicate that it needed

it,—we drew the St. Lawrence, with its parishes, thereon, and thenceforward went on swimmingly, by turns handling the chalk and committing to the table-cloth what would otherwise have been left in a limbo of unintelligibility. This was greatly to the entertainment of all parties. I was amused to hear how much use they made of the word *oui* in conversation with one another. After repeated single insertions of it, one would suddenly throw back his head at the same time with his chair, and exclaim rapidly, '*Oui! oui! oui! oui!*' like a Yankee driving pigs. Our host told us that the farms thereabouts were generally two acres, or three hundred and sixty feet wide by one and a half leagues (?), or a little more than four and a half of our miles deep. This use of the word *acre* as long measure arises from the fact that the French acre or *arpent*, the *arpent* of Paris, makes a square of ten perches of eighteen feet each on a side, a Paris foot being equal to 1.06575 English feet. He said that the wood was cut off about one mile from the river. The rest was 'bush,' and beyond that the 'Queen's bush.' Old as the country is, each land-holder bounds on the primitive forest, and fuel bears no price. As I had forgotten the French for *sickle*, they went out in the evening to the barn and got one, and so clenched the certainty of our understanding one another. Then, wishing to learn if they used the cradle, and not know-

ing any French word for this instrument, I set up some knives and forks on the blade of the sickle to represent one, at which they all exclaimed that they knew and had used it. When *snells* were mentioned they went out in the dark and plucked some. They were pretty good. They said they had three kinds of plums growing wild,—blue, white, and red, the two former much alike and the best. Also they asked me if I would have *des pommes*, some apples, and got me some. They were exceedingly fair and glossy, and it was evident that there was no worm in them; but they were as hard almost as a stone, as if the season was too short to mellow them. We had seen no soft and yellow apples by the road side. I declined eating one, much as I admired it, observing that it would be good *dans les printemps*, — in the spring. In the morning when the mistress had set the eggs a-frying, she nodded to a thick-set jolly-looking fellow, who rolled up his sleeves, seized the long-handled griddle, and commenced a series of revolutions and evolutions with it, ever and anon tossing its contents into the air, where they turned completely topsy-turvy and came down t'other side up; and this he repeated till they were done. That appeared to be his duty when eggs were concerned. I did not chance to witness this performance, but my companion did, and he pronounced it a masterpiece in its way. This man's farm, with

the buildings, cost seven hundred pounds; some smaller ones two hundred."

Though to the end Thoreau remained a true naturalist and lover of the 'lower brethren,' he abandoned Walden, as we have hinted, when he believed he had fully served his purpose with it, having resided there two years and two months. Not long after his return his father died, and then, in spite of the protest he had made, he returned to the lead-pencil making, at the call of duty, devoting himself to it with persistent assiduity. He had his own mill, and discovered remarkable punctuality and prudence, providing for those who were thus so far made dependent upon him.

But it was his delight, as we have seen, still to go on excursions here and there when he had leisure; and sometimes he would organize parties for adventures in regions somewhat distant. Mr. Channing gives us this little glimpse of his last excursion to the White Mountains, in July, 1858, when 'a friendly coincidence' happened:—

"Two of his friends thought they might chance upon him there; and, though he dreamed little of seeing them, he left a note at the Mountain-house, which said where he was going, and told them, if they looked, 'they would see the smoke of his fire.' This came to be true, the brush taking the flame, and a smoke rising to be seen all over the valley. Meantime

Thoreau, in leaping from one mossy rock to another (after nearly sliding down the snow-crust on the side of Tuckerman's Ravine, and saved by digging his nails into the snow), had fallen and severely sprained his foot. Before this he had found the *Arnica mollis*, a plant famous for its healing properties; but he preferred the ice-cold water of the mountain stream, into which he boldly plunged his tortured limb, to reduce the swelling, had the tent spread, and then, the rain beginning to come down, so came his two friends down the mountain as well, their outer integuments decimated with their tramp in the scrub. They had seen the smoke, and here they were in this little tent made for two, the rain falling all the while, and five full-grown men to be packed in for five days and nights, Thoreau unable to move on; but he sat and entertained them heartily. He admired the rose-colored linnæas lining the side of the narrow horse-track through the fir-scrub and the leopard-spotted land below the mountains. He had seen the pines in Fitzwilliam in a primeval wood-lot, and 'their singular beauty made such an impression that I was forced to turn aside and contemplate them. They were so round and perpendicular that my eyes slid off.'"

From earliest years, the thought of the complicity of his country in the great sin of slavery had depressed

him, and latterly had done much to render him unduly depreciatory of parties and politicians, though he paid his uniform tribute of respect to the anti-slavery party. When at Walden he had, by his personal assistance, aided more than one slave 'toward the North star.' His convictions on that point only deepened with the years. When he was followed to the forest for some taxes which he regarded as unjust, and which he refused to pay, and went to jail on account of, it is characteristic that he deems himself henceforth absolved from any other than passive obedience to a State which bought and sold men like chattels at its Congress doors. He had a firm faith that it needed only ONE valiant man to break the 'devil's bonds' in which his country had bound herself. The man who was nearest the right was already, he held, in a majority of one, and his decisive testimony would finally be crowned with success. "I know this well," he says, "that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name,—if ten *honest* men only,—ay, if *one* HONEST man in this State of Massachusetts, *ceasing to hold slaves*, were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefor, it would be the abolition of slavery in America."

When, in 1841, Anthony Burns — a runaway slave, — was recovered and sent back by the State of Massa-

chusetts, it wholly unfitted him, stoic though he is said to have been, for any work. He could not rest till he had said his say; and in his speech on the occasion occurred this passage: —

"The effect of a good government is to make life more valuable, — of a bad one to make it less valuable. We can afford that railroad and all merely material stock should lose some of its value; for that only compels us to live more simply and economically; but suppose that the value of life itself should be diminished! How can we make a less demand on man and nature, how live more economically in respect to virtue, and all noble qualities, than we do. I have lived for the last month — and I think that every man in Massachusetts capable of the sentiment of patriotism must have had a similar experience — with the sense of having suffered a vast and indefinite loss. I did not know at first what ailed me. At last it occurred to me that what I had lost was a country. I had never respected the Government near which I lived, but I had foolishly thought that I might manage to live here, minding my private affairs, and forget it. For my part, my old and worthiest pursuits have lost I cannot say how much of their attraction, and I feel that my investment in life here is worth many per cent less since Massachusetts has deliberately sent back an innocent man — Anthony Burns — to slavery. I dwelt

before, perhaps, in the illusion that my life passed somewhere only *between* heaven and hell; but now I cannot persuade myself that I do not dwell *wholly within* hell. . . . Life itself being worthless, all things with it which minister to it are worthless. I feel that to some extent the State has fatally interfered with my lawful business. I am surprised to see men going about their business as if nothing had happened. I say to myself, 'Unfortunately, they have not heard the news.' I am surprised that the man I have just met on horseback should be so earnest to overtake his newly-bought cows running away — since all property is insecure, and if they do not run away again, they may be taken from him when he gets them. Fool! does he not know that his seed corn is worth less this year,— that all beneficent harvests fail as you approach the empire of hell? No prudent men will build a store-house under these circumstances, or engage in any peaceful enterprise which it requires a long time to accomplish. Art is as long as ever, but life is more interrupted and less available for a man's proper pursuits. It is not an era of repose. We have used up all our inherited freedom. If we would save our lives, we must fight for them.

"I walk toward one of our ponds; but what signifies the beauty of Nature when men are base? We walk to the lakes to see our serenity reflected in them;

when we are not serene, we go not to them. Who can be serene in a country where both the ruler and the ruled are without principle? The remembrance of my country spoils my walk. My thoughts are murder to the State, and involuntarily go plotting against her.

"But it chanced the other day that I scented a white water-lily, and a season I had waited for had arrived. It is the emblem of purity. It bursts up so pure and fair to the eye, and so sweet to the scent, as if to show us what purity and sweetness reside in, and can be extracted from,—the slime and muck of the earth. I think I have plucked the first one that has opened for a mile. What confirmation of our hopes is in the fragrance of this flower! I shall not so soon despair of the world for it, notwithstanding slavery, and the cowardice and want of principle of Northern men. It suggests what kind of laws have prevailed longest and widest, and still prevail, and that the time may come when men's deeds shall smell as sweet. Such is the odor which the plant emits. If Nature can compound this fragrance still annually, I shall believe her still young and full of vigor, her integrity and genius unimpaired, and that there is virtue even in man, too, who is fitted to perceive and love it. It reminds me that Nature has been partner to no Missouri Compromise. I scent no compromise in

the fragrance of the water-lily. It is not a *Nymphæa Douglasii.* In it the sweet, and pure, and innocent are wholly sundered from the obscene and baleful. I do not scent in this the time-serving irresolution of a Massachusetts governor, nor of a Boston mayor. So behave that the odor of your actions may enhance the general sweetness of the atmosphere, that when we behold or scent a flower we may not be reminded how inconsistent your deeds are with it; for all odor is but one form of advertisement of a moral quality, and if fair actions had not been performed, the lily would not smell sweet. The foul slime stands for the sloth and vice of man, the decay of humanity; the fragrant flower that springs from it for the purity and courage which are immortal.

"Slavery and servility have produced no sweet-scented flower annually, to charm the senses of men, for they have no real life; they are merely a decaying and a death, offensive to all healthy nostrils. We do not complain that they *live*, but that they do not *get buried.* Let the living bury them; even they are good for manure."

In 1854, he addressed the people of Framingham in words of the same tenor:—

"Three years ago, just a week after the authorities of Boston assembled to carry back a perfectly innocent man, and one whom they knew to be innocent,

into slavery, the inhabitants of Concord caused the bells to be rung and the cannons to be fired, to celebrate their liberty, and the courage and love of liberty of their ancestors who fought at the bridge. As if *those* three millions had fought for the right to be free themselves, but to hold in slavery three million others. Now-a-days, men wear a fool's-cap, and call it a liberty-cap. I do not know but there are some who, if they were tied to a whipping-post, and could get but one hand free, would use it to ring the bells, and fire the cannon to celebrate *their* victory. So some of my townsmen took the liberty to ring and fire. That was the extent of their freedom; and when the sound of the bells died away, their liberty died away also; when the powder was all expended, their liberty went also with the smoke. The joke could be no broader if the inmates of the prisons were to subscribe for all the powder to be used in such salutes, and hire the jailers to do the firing and ringing for them, while they enjoyed it through the grating. . . .

"Much has been said about American slavery, but I think that we do not even yet realize what slavery is. If I were seriously to propose to Congress to make mankind into sausages, I have no doubt that most of the members would smile at my proposition; and if any believed me to be in earnest, they would

think that I proposed something much worse than Congress had ever done. But if any one of them will tell me that to make a man into a sausage would be much worse — would be any worse — than to make him into a slave, — than it was to enact the Fugitive Slave Law, — I will accuse him of foolishness, of intellectual incapacity, of making a distinction without a difference. The one is just as sensible a proposition as the other.

"I do not wish to believe that the courts were made for fair weather, and for very civil cases merely; but think of leaving it to any court in the land to decide whether more than three millions of people — in this case, a sixth part of a nation — have a right to be freemen or not? . . . The law will never make men free; it is men who have got to make the law free. They are the lovers of law and order who observe the law when the Government breaks it. . . . Whoever can discern truth has received his commission from a higher source than the chiefest justice in the world who can discern only law. He it is that delivers *sentence*. He finds himself constituted judge of the judge."

Nor does he leave his audience with only general denunciation. He has practical suggestions though they are not of a kind to recommend him to the 'able editors' who have so much to do with accelerating or

retarding that less fine sort of greatness, which results mainly from the publicity of the newspapers.

"Among measures to be adopted, I would suggest to make as earnest and vigorous an assault on the Press as has already been made, and with effect, on the Church. The Church has much improved within a few years; but the Press is, almost without exception, corrupt. I believe that in this country the Press exerts a greater and a more pernicious influence than the Church did in its worst period in the Middle Ages. We are not a religious people, but we are a nation of politicians. We do not care for the Bible, but we do care for the newspaper. At any meeting of politicians — like that at Concord the other evening, for instance, — how impertinent it would be to quote from the Bible! how pertinent to quote from a newspaper or from the Constitution! The newspaper is a bible which we read every morning and every afternoon, standing and sitting, riding and walking. It is a bible which every man carries in his pocket, which lies on every table and counter, and which the mail and thousands of missionaries are continually dispersing. It is in short the only book which America has printed, and which America reads. So wide is its influence. The editor is a preacher whom you voluntarily support. Your tax is commonly one cent daily, and it costs nothing for pew-hire. But how many of these

preachers preach the truth? I repeat the testimony of many an intelligent foreigner, as well as my own convictions, when I say that probably no country was ever ruled by so mean a class of tyrants as, with a few noble exceptions, are the editors of the periodical press in *this* country. And as they live and rule only by their servility, and appealing to the worse, and not the better, nature of man, the people who read them are in the condition of the dog that returns to his vomit."

After this we can the more easily believe that "he detected paltering as readily in dignified and prosperous persons as in beggars, and with equal scorn. Such dangerous frankness," we are told, was in his dealing, "that his admirers called him that 'terrible Thoreau,' as if he spoke when silent, and was still present when he had departed."

And when Captain John Brown — with whose honest puritanism of doctrine Thoreau would have had little sympathy — justified his puritan doctrines by his actions, and approved himself the ONE man, *with the majority behind him*, for whom Thoreau had waited, he accepted him as a 'true transcendentalist.'

We here insert some of John Brown's utterances, to show how his words and his actions harmonized: —

"I believe in the Golden Rule, sir, and the Declaration of Independence. I think they both mean the

same thing; and it is better that a whole generation should pass off the face of the earth — men, women, and children — by a violent death, than that one jot of either should fail in this country.

"It is nothing to die in a good cause, but an eternal disgrace to sit still in the presence of the barbarities of American slavery.

"An old man should have more care to end life well than to live long.

"Duty is the voice of God, and a man is neither worthy of a good home here, or a heaven, that is not willing to be in peril for a good cause.

"The loss of my family and the trouble in Kansas have shattered my constitution, and I am nothing in the world but to defend the right, and that, by God's help, I have done and will do."

When John Brown was arrested in October, 1859, after having bravely laid the first spark to the train that was at last effectually to blow up the slave-holding interest, Thoreau, notwithstanding his dislike of platforms, felt himself called on to say what he thought. He sent notices to most houses in Concord that he would speak in a public hall on the condition and character of John Brown, on Sunday evening, and invited all to come. The Republican Committee, the Abolitionist Committee, sent him word that it was premature and not advisable. He replied, "I did not

send to you for advice, but to announce that I am to speak." The hall was "filled at an early hour by people of all parties, and his earnest eulogy of the hero was heard by all respectfully, by many with a sympathy that surprised themselves." We extract here one of the most memorable passages, which almost looks like a prophecy:—

"I am here to plead his cause with you. I plead not for his life, but his character,—his immortal life; and so it becomes your cause wholly, and not his in the least. . . . I see now that it was necessary that the bravest and humanest man in the country should be hung. Perhaps he saw it himself. *I almost fear* that I may yet hear of his deliverance, doubting if a prolonged life, if any life, can do as much good as his death."

And he recalls with delight some of the impressions produced on him by his meeting with John Brown some time before:—

"I noticed that he did not overstate anything, but spoke within bounds. I remember particularly how he referred to what his family had suffered in Kansas, without even giving the least vent to his pent-up fire. . . . When I expressed surprise that he could live in Kansas at all with a price set on his head, and so large a number, including the authorities, exasperated against him, he accounted for it by saying, 'It is per-

fectly well understood that I will not be taken.' Much of the time he had to skulk in swamps, suffering from poverty and from sickness, which was the consequence of exposure, befriended only by Indians and a few whites. But though it might be known that he was lurking in a particular swamp, his foes commonly did not care to go in after him. He could even come out into a town where there were more Border Ruffians than Free State men, and transact some business, without delaying long, and yet not be molested; for, said he, 'No little handful of men were willing to undertake it, and a large body could not be got together in season.'"

And after John Brown had been hung, Thoreau wrote in July, 1860:—

"For my own part, I commonly attend more to nature than to man, but any affecting human event may blind our eyes to natural objects. I was so absorbed in him as to be surprised whenever I detected the routine of the natural world surviving still, or met persons going about their affairs indifferent. It appeared strange to me that the 'little dipper' should be still diving quietly in the river, as of yore; and it suggested that this bird might continue to dive here when Concord should be no more.

"I felt that he, a prisoner in the midst of his enemies, and under sentence of death, if consulted as to

his next step or resource, could answer more wisely than all his countrymen beside. He best understood his position; he contemplated it most calmly. Comparatively, all other men, North and South, were beside themselves. Our thoughts could not revert to any greater, or wiser, or better man with whom to contrast him, for he, then and there, was above them all. The man this country was about to hang appeared the greatest and best in it. . . . Nothing could his enemies do but it redounded to his infinite advantage, — that is, to the advantage of his cause. They did not hang him at once, but reserved him to preach to them. They did not hang his four followers with him; that scene was still postponed; and so his victory was prolonged and completed. . . .

"On the day of his translation I heard, to be sure, that he was *hung*, but I did not know what that meant; I felt no sorrow on that account; but not for a day or two did I even *hear* that he was *dead*, and not after any number of days shall I believe it. Of all the men who were said to be my contemporaries, it seemed to me that John Brown was the only one who *had not died*. I never hear of a man named Brown now — and I hear of them pretty often, — I never hear of any particular brave and earnest man, but my first thought is of John Brown, and what relation he may be to him. I meet him at every turn. He

is more alive than he ever was. He has earned immortality. He is not confined to North Elba nor to Kansas. He is no longer working in secret. He works in public, in the clearest light that shines in the land."

Amid all the concern and grief caused him by the conduct of Northern statesmen in their unwise playing into the hands of the slave-holders, by which they could only stave off the evil and intensify the crisis that was inevitable, he endeavored to pursue his scientific studies, still making excursions here and there. The most notable of these was, perhaps, his great tour to Minnesota and the West, in 1860, when he exulted in finding the crab apple, and in making friends with the Indians there, who interested him vastly. In November of 1860 he took a severe cold, through exposing himself while counting the rings on trees, and when there was snow on the ground. A bronchial affection set in, which caused him great pain. This he bore uncomplainingly, with a stoical fortitude, touched with such tenderness, as made his last days truly typical of his life. Mr. W. E. Channing, who was often with him then, bears witness to the spirit that characterized him: —

"With an unfaltering trust in God's mercies, and never deserted by his good genius, he bravely bore

the pains of his terrible malady, working steadily at his papers to the last. His patience was unfailing. He knew not aught save resignation; and he did nightly cheer those whose strength was less. As long as he could possibly sit up, he insisted on his chair at the family table, and said, 'It would not be social to take my meals alone.' And on hearing an organ in the streets, playing some old tune of his childood he should never hear again, the tears fell from his eyes, and he said, 'Give him some money, give him some money.'

> 'He was retired as noontide dew,
> Or fountain in a noonday grove;
> And you must love him ere to you
> He would seem worthy of your love.
> The outward shows of sky and earth,
> Of hill and valley he has viewed;
> And impulses of deeper birth
> Have come to him in solitude.'"

He lingered on thus till the following spring, and died on the morning of the 8th of May, 1861. Mr. Alger, who has freely criticised him, has well said: —

"His interior life, with the relations of thoughts and things, was intensely tender and true, however sorely ajar he may sometimes have been with persons and with the ideas of persons. If he was sour, it was on a store of sweetness; if sad, on a fund of gladness.

"While we walked in procession up to the church, though the bell tolled the forty-four years he had numbered, we could not deem that *he* was dead whose

ideas and sentiments were so vivid in our souls. As the fading image of pathetic clay lay before us, strewn with wild flowers and forest sprigs, thoughts of its former occupant seemed blent with all the local landscapes. We still recall with emotion the tributary words so fitly spoken by friendly and illustrious lips. The hands of friends reverently lowered the body of the lonely poet into the bosom of the earth, on the pleasant hill-side of his native village, whose prospects will long wait to unfurl themselves to another observer so competent to discriminate their features, and so attuned to their moods. And now that it is too late for any further boon amidst his darling haunts below —

> 'There will yet his mother yield
> A pillow in her greenest field,
> Nor the pure flowers scorn to cover
> The clay of their departed lover.'"

II.

The retreat to Walden has led to much misunderstanding,—to the charge that Thoreau was a morbid egotist, a sentimentalist, a solitary; a charge which has been boldly repeated, recently, by high authorities, who should have known better. Nothing could well be further from the truth. He was not always logically consistent in his utterances, and, indeed, did not aim at being so; but, amid all his *brusquerie*, we detect the note of real interest in humanity and in human affairs. Only, you must not bore him with minor details of tap-room gossip, or with the news of the cliques. It was, indeed, against *cliquerie* and all forms of false and half-hearted association that he had taken up his parable; and when he retired to Walden he almost tells in his own words that he unconsciously acted on the axiom of Goethe, "When I need to recruit my strength I must retire into solitude." But neither with Thoreau nor with Goethe could that solitude be a period of inertia, of weak self-pity, or of brooding discontent; it must have its own activities,

its own interests with a genuine restoring charm caught from Nature. Were this missed, all was missed. The Walden episode is not seen truly until it is viewed in relation to the whole scope and purpose of Thoreau's life. What led him to Walden determined his attitude to human institutions; and the same experiment, in a less striking form, was carried on to the end. Thoreau went to Walden not to escape men, but to prepare himself for them, and, as far as he could, for the artificial conventions on which society necessarily rests; not to brood, but to act — only to act in lines that would enable him to stand for ever after — free, vigorous, independent. There is a strange, close-packed realism in his writing, in large measure derived from this, a realism thoroughly symptomatic of the man and his character, as though he specially followed Nature in her economy of seed-packing; and it should be observed that you never get a hint of the recluse, who speedily falls to dreaming and vain pitying of himself. There is no self-pity in Thoreau, rather a robust self-sufficiency that could claim the privilege of rendering manly help, though never seeking or accepting any, and that loves to administer readily what Emerson calls 'shocks of effort.' But there was in him nothing of the rebel proper; he delighted above all things to be at home, and to reverence, only you must allow him something of his own way. When he

refused to pay taxes after Government followed him to the forest, it was out of no abstract opposition or dislike to society,—he was the last man to act from sentiment; he asserted that there was still a sphere where Government had no right to follow if a man could only find and fix it, and where it did despite to itself by the assertion of its power.

Something is also to be said for the circumstances amid which he was cast. Instead of being a solitary, he was more than usually sensitive to influences operating around him. Indeed, it is the consciousness of a necessity to resist that imparts the tone which has been mistaken for morbid. When the wave of transcendentalism met that of ultra-practicalism,—intensified by the expansion of territory which presented a wider sphere for it to act in,—and threatened to be swallowed up by it, what was left for a faithful disciple but to bear his witness for the individuality which he had learned to value through transcendentalism, but which was now well nigh threatened with extinction? Thoreau's retreat to Walden may have a meaning in this light also. Witnesses, many and powerful, transcendentalism has had; Thoreau is its hermit, if you will, but a hermit who consciously carries society in all its higher interests with him. While his own countrymen with fatal inconsistency have too largely regarded him as a morbid solitary, we in England, if

we had not followed them, have erred by conceiving of him as a kind of semi-wild man of the woods, with no reason or order in his procedure, though now and then throwing out fine thoughts, and saved from being a wild man altogether only by a dash of rarer instinct, which made him influential with the lower creatures, but divorced him from human society, if it did not even make him its enemy. Thoreau, instead of being divorced from the spirit of his day, in a special way interpreted it. He would not spend time in trying or experimenting with conventions, which he held had been already sufficiently tested; he would go to the heart of Nature and try to learn for himself some new law there, or at least to see the old laws in direct and clear relation to his own spirit. As others tried it in various forms of association, so he in his convention with Nature, the one experiment, as he held it, being just as valuable as the other. Democracy in a new country must ever be as hard on individuality as aristocracy in an old one: the problem is to maintain that intact, and do no despite to others in the process. The very presence of society limits your freedom of action; it may be well to learn freedom apart, that even the self-control due to society may have real value in it, and not be automatic merely. Mechanical arrangements are the death of all true society: let us learn

to dispense with them, or to consider them at least non-essential.

There is a social and moral regeneration, for the want of which it may be said that, at certain crises, the world becomes inert and sick. For this disease there may be many medicines: socialism may contribute its quota of relief; and practical political reforms rightly directed may do a little. Let us one and all be true to ourselves first, said Thoreau, and cherish whatever instincts and impulses are sent to us direct from Nature. Then we may return to practical and social life, pure if not strong, with a capacity as of genius, to relieve ourselves from the tyranny of social pre-occupations and self-occupying thoughts, of which thousands daily die, or doom themselves to a living death, strangled as if by Lilliputian cords. He believed with his whole soul, like Wordsworth, in the fountains that are within. Returning thus to the demands of busy life, he held that we should have capacities of enjoyment and service more than doubled,— fitted to be at once true citizens, true to ourselves, faithful reformers, very jealous of what is accepted merely by authority or for its newness; ready to return on the simplest principles of right and to defend them. In this way Thoreau, the morbid solitary, quite consistently became the champion of John Brown, of Harper's Ferry. Many were much disappointed when

Thoreau did what they would have clamorously praised in any other public man. Thoreau was consistent, and their insight had been at fault. He waged a war with the power of mere wealth and perverted authority, whether in the North or in the South, and was at a crisis on the side of humanity because he reasoned that, in the last resort, the cause of humanity and the cause of individuality were identical. The teeming wealth of a new and illimitable country must ever, in the outset, oppose itself to the assertion of the individual genius, and essay (if we may speak so) to break it down to its own level, as the trees, growing freely yet closely together in the forest, preserve and foster each other, but rise very much of one size and all alike in form. Society in such conditions in no slight measure exists by the very reaction it breeds, for it is quite impossible to calculate the benefit to American life of the inconsistent deference practically paid by its professed Republican members to royalty and aristocracy in every form. Hawthorne, Emerson, and Thoreau have all used this reaction in favor of true progress and brotherhood, as against the 'almighty dollar' and spread-eagleism. Hawthorne's works, are they not in essence a protest against every kind of Republican levelling down? He sought, in the puritan sentiment which was supplied to American history with its relations to old English life, for traditions that

recalled the inherited mysteries and dooms of life,—breeding distinctions,—and from that root what a tree grew up in the atmosphere of his quaint genius! Emerson, again, found compensating forces in the solitude and the occupations possible only in a country which is new, and not yet pressed for breathing space; and Thoreau, perhaps more than either, in the testimony which a real retirement from society could render to the highest idea of individuality, as the foundation stone of a truly cultured and progressive society.

It was not civilization, as has been very stupidly said, that he was at odds with. It was the special evils induced by civilization which, he held, could be cured by a general or even an extensive return to simplicity of life and habit. He looked at the savages, and he saw that among them the poorest enjoyed as good a shelter as the richest, and that none were starving while others were in luxury. Then he looked first at the city palace, and next at the squalid disease-breeding cellars that lay wide around it on the right and on the left, and he inquired whether "we might not, with a little more wit, use the accumulated material so as to become richer than the richest now are, and to make our civilization a blessing." Therefore he did not creep into a wigwam, or try to wear skins in Walden, but built a *house* there of boards and

shingle, wood and bricks. He delights to think that he practised the generous course of "giving his fellow-men an interest in his enterprise," by borrowing an axe to hew down the tall, arrowy white pines for timber. "The owner of the axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye; but I returned it sharper than I received it,"—the true idea of reciprocity on which society is primarily founded. In the beginning of May, when he was ready to set up the frame of the house, it was *with the help of some acquaintances, rather to improve so good an occasion for neighborliness than from necessity.* He listens to the sound of the Sunday bells,—"faint and sweet, a melody worth importing into the wilderness," and is soothed to a mood of worship and brotherliness. He hears the scream of the locomotive, softened down by distance, and reflects that commerce, truly pursued, is healthy, and recommends itself by enterprise and bravery; is unexpectedly confident and serene, alert, adventurous, and unwearied. It brings the palm leaf, the sight of which makes him feel a citizen of the world. "I see men," he exclaims, "every day go about their business with more or less courage or content, doing more even than they suspect, and perchance better employed than they could have consciously devised." Nor did society fail him. "As for men, they will hardly fail one anywhere. I had more visitors

while I lived in the woods than at any other period of my life: I mean that I had some. I met several there under more favorable circumstances than I could any where else. But fewer came to see me upon trivial business. In this respect my company was winnowed by my mere distance from town. I had withdrawn so far within the great ocean of solitude into which the rivers of society empty that, for the most part, so far as my needs were concerned, only the finest sediment was deposited around me. *Besides, there were wafted to me evidences of unexplored and uncultivated continents on either side.*"

And thus, as he confesses, he gains discoveries in Man, as in Nature, by his ability to view them from a new stand-point. He found the downright sense and naturalness of the farmer refreshing to his spirit,—"like the sweetness of a nut, like the toughness of hickory." Nay, he avows his indebtedness in words that, coming from such a man, seem high-pitched:—

"He, too, is a redeemer for me. How superior actually to the faith he professes! He is not an office seeker. What an institution, what a revelation is a man! We want foolishly to think the creed a man professes a more significant fact than the man he is."

He rejoices in fit visitors at fit times; all are welcome,—save, indeed, the man who affectedly pretends to enjoyment of Nature and the woods when his pre-

occupation is ill-concealed and betrays him. Heartily he writes about a different kind of visitors: —

"Children come a-berrying, railroad men taking a Sunday morning walk in clean shirts, fishermen and hunters, poets and philosophers; in short, all honest pilgrims, who came out to the woods for freedom's sake and really left the village and town behind, I was ready to greet with — 'Welcome, Englishmen, welcome, Englishmen!' for I had had communication with that race."

Several of his visitors and neighbors he celebrates; but there is one in especial, — 'a true Homeric or Paphlagonian man' whom he sets before us with such impartial, healthy, and loving touches, so absolutely suited to the subject, as to rebut forever the charge of Mr. Lowell in the *North American Review* that he had no humor: —

"Who should come to my lodge this morning but a true Homeric or Paphlagonian man,— he had so suitable and poetic a name that I am sorry I cannot print it here,— a Canadian, a wood chopper and post maker who can hole fifty posts in a day, who made his last supper on a woodchuck which his dog caught. He, too, has heard of Homer, and, 'if it were not for books,' would not know what to do rainy days,' though, perhaps, he has not read one wholly through for many rainy seasons. Some priest who could pronounce the

Greek itself taught him to read his verse in the Testament, in his native parish far away; and now I must translate to him, while he holds the book, Achilles' reproof to Patroclus for his sad countenance.—'Why are you in tears, Patroclus, like a young girl?'—

> 'Or, have you alone heard some news from Phthia?
> They say that Menœtius lives yet, son of Actor,
> And Peleus lives, son of Æacus, among the Myrmidons,
> Either of whom having died, we should greatly grieve.'

He says, 'That's good.' *He has a great bundle of white-oak bark under his arm, for a sick man, gathered this Sunday morning.* 'I suppose there's no harm in going after such a thing today,' says he. To him Homer was a great writer, though what his writing was about he did not know. A more simple and natural man it would be hard to find. Vice and disease, which cast such a sombre hue over the world, seemed to have hardly any existence for him. He was about twenty-eight years old, and had left Canada and his father's house a dozen years before, to work in the States, and earn money to buy a farm with at last, perhaps in his native county. He was cast in the coarsest mould.—a stout but sluggish body, yet gracefully carried, with a thick sun-burnt neck, dark bushy hair, and dull sleepy blue eyes, which were occasionally lit up with expression. He wore a flat gray cloth cap, a dingy wool-colored great coat, and

cowhide boots. He was a great consumer of meat, usually carrying his dinner to his work, a couple of miles past my house,—for he chopped all summer,—in a tin pail; cold meats, often cold woodchucks, and coffee in a stone bottle, which dangled by a string from his belt; and sometimes he offered me a drink. He came along early, crossing my bean-field, though without anxiety or haste to get to his work, such as Yankees exhibit. He was n't agoing to hurt himself. He did n't care if he only earned his board. Frequently he would leave his dinner in the bushes, when his dog had caught a woodchuck by the way, and go back a mile and a half to dress it, and leave it in the cellar of the house where he boarded, after deliberating first for half an hour whether he could not sink it in the pond safely till nightfall,—loving to dwell long upon these themes. He would say, as he went by in the morning, 'How thick the pigeons are! If working every day were not my trade, I could get all the meat I should want by hunting,—pigeons, woodchucks, rabbits, partridges,—by gosh! I could get all I should want for a week in one day!'

"He was a skillful chopper, and indulged in some flourishes and ornaments in his art. He cut his trees level, and close to the ground, that the sprouts which came up afterward might be more vigorous, and a sled might slide over the stumps; and instead of leav-

ing a whole tree to support his corded wood, he would pare it away to a slender stake or splinter, which you could break off with your hand at last.

"He interested me because he was so quiet and solitary, and so happy withal,—a well of good humor and contentment which overflowed at his eyes. His mirth was without alloy. Sometimes I saw him at his work in the woods, felling trees, and he would greet me with a laugh of inexpressible satisfaction, and a salutation in Canadian French, though he spoke English as well. When I approached him he would suspend his work, and, with half suppressed mirth, lie along the trunk of a pine which he had felled, and, peeling off the inner bark, roll it up into a ball, and chew it while he laughed and talked. Such an exuberance of animal spirits had he that he sometimes tumbled down and rolled on the ground with laughter at anything that made him think, and tickled him. Looking round upon the trees, he would exclaim,—'By George! I can enjoy myself well enough here chopping; I want no better sport.' Sometimes, when at leisure, he amused himself all day in the woods with a pocket pistol, firing salutes to himself at regular intervals as he walked. In the winter he had a fire by which, at noon, he warmed his coffee in a kettle; and as he sat on a log to eat his dinner, the chickadees would sometimes come round and alight on his arm

and peck at the potato in his fingers; and he said that 'he liked to have the little *fellers* about him.'

"In him the animal man chiefly was developed. In physical endurance and contentment he was cousin to the pine and the rock. I asked him once if he was not sometimes tired at night after working all day; and he answered, with a sincere and serious look, 'Gorrappit, I never was tired in my life.' But the intellectual and what is called spiritual man in him were slumbering as in an infant. He had been instructed only in that innocent and ineffectual way in which the Catholic priests teach the aborigines, by which the pupil is never educated to the degree of consciousness, but only to the degree of trust and reverence; and a child is not made a man, but kept a child. When Nature made him, she gave him a strong body and contentment for his portion, and propped him on every side with reverence and reliance, that he might live out his three score years and ten a child. He was so genuine and unsophisticated that no introduction would serve to introduce him, more than if you introduced a woodchuck to your neighbor. He had got to find him out as you did. He would not play any part. Men paid him wages for work, and so helped to feed and clothe him: but he never exchanged opinions with them. He was so simply and naturally humble — if he can be called humble who never aspires — that

humility was no distinct quality in him, nor could he conceive of it. Wiser men were demigods to him. If you told him that such a one was coming, he did as if he thought that anything so grand would expect nothing of himself, but take all the responsibility on itself, and let him be forgotten still. He never heard the sound of praise. He particularly reverenced the writer and the preacher. Their performances were miracles. When I told him that I wrote considerably, he thought for a long time that it was merely the handwriting which I meant, for he could write a remarkably good hand himself. I sometimes found the name of his native parish handsomely written in the snow by the highway, with the proper French accent, and knew that he had passed. I asked him if he ever wished to write his thoughts. He said that he had read and written letters for those who could not, but he never tried to write thoughts,—no, he could not, he could not tell what to put first; it would kill him; and then there was spelling to be attended to at the same time!

"I heard that a distinguished wise man and reformer asked him if he did not want the world to be changed; but he answered with a chuckle of surprise in his Canadian accent, not knowing that the question had ever been entertained before, 'No, I like it well enough.' It would have suggested many things to a philosopher

to have had dealings with him. To a stranger he appeared to know nothing of things in general; yet I sometimes saw in him a man whom I had not seen before, and I did not know whether he was as wise as Shakespeare or as simply ignorant as a child, whether to suspect him of a fine poetic consciousness or of stupidity. A townsman told me that when he met him sauntering through the village in his small, close-fitting cap, and whistling to himself, he reminded him of a prince in disguise.

"His only books were an almanac and an arithmetic, in which last he was considerably expert. The former was a sort of cyclopædia to him, which he supposed to contain an abstract of human knowledge, as indeed it does to a considerable extent. I loved to sound him on the various reforms of the day, and he never failed to look at them in the most simple and practical light. He had never heard of such things before. Could he do without factories? I asked. He had worn the home-made Vermont gray, he said, and that was good. Could he dispense with tea or coffee? Did this country afford any beverage beside water? He had soaked hemlock leaves in water and drank it, and thought that was better than water in warm weather. When I asked him if he could do without money, he showed the convenience of money in such a way as to suggest and coincide with the most philosophical accounts of

the origin of this institution, and the very derivation of the word *pecunia*. If an ox were his property, and he wished to get needles and thread at the store, he thought it would be inconvenient and impossible soon to go on mortgaging some portion of the creature each time to that account. He could defend many institutions better than any philosopher, because, in describing them as they concerned him, he gave the true reason for their prevalence, and speculation had not suggested to him any other. At another time, hearing Plato's definition of a man,—a biped without feathers,—and that one exhibited a cock plucked and called it Plato's man, he thought it an important difference that the *knees* bent the wrong way. He would sometimes exclaim, 'How I love to talk! By George, I could talk all day!' I asked him once, when I had not seen him for many months, if he had got a new idea this summer. 'Good Lord!' said he; 'a man that has to work as I do, if he does not forget the ideas he has had, he will do well. Maybe the man you hoe with is inclined to race; then, by gorry, your mind must be there; you think of weeds.' He would sometimes ask me first, on such occasions, if I had made any improvement. One winter day I asked him if he was always satisfied with himself, wishing to suggest a substitute within him for the priest without, and some higher motive for living. 'Satisfied!' said

he, 'some men are satisfied with one thing, and some with another. One man, perhaps, if he has got enough, will be satisfied to sit all day with his back to the fire and his belly to the table, by George!' Yet, I never, by any manœuvering, could get him to take the spiritual view of things; the highest that he appeared to conceive of was a simple expediency, such as you might expect an animal to appreciate; and this, practically, is true of most men. If I suggested any improvement in his mode of life, he merely answered, without expressing any regret, that it was too late. Yet he thoroughly believed in honesty and the like virtues.

"There was a certain positive originality, however slight, to be detected in him; and I occasionally observed that he was thinking for himself and *expressing his own opinion, a phenomenon so rare that I would walk ten miles any day to observe it, and it amounted to the reorganization of many of the institutions of society.* Though he hesitated, and perhaps failed to express himself distinctly, he always had a presentable thought behind. Yet his thinking was so primitive and immersed in his animal life that, though more promising than a merely learned man's, it rarely ripened to anything which can be reported. He suggested that there might be men of genius in the lowest grades of life, however permanently humble and illiterate, who take their own view

always, or do not pretend to see at all; who are as bottomless as Walden Pond was thought to be, though they may be dark and muddy."

The following picture of Baker Farm will, no doubt, be taken to illustrate the same characteristics: —

"I set out one afternoon to go a-fishing to Fair-Haven, through the woods, to eke out my scanty fare of vegetables. My way led through Pleasant Meadow, an adjunct of the Baker Farm, that retreat of which a poet has since sung, beginning —

> 'Thy entry is a pleasant field,
> Which some mossy fruit trees yield
> Partly to a ruddy brook,
> By gliding musquash undertook,
> And mercurial trout,
> Darting about.'

I thought of living there before I went to Walden. I 'hooked' the apples, leaped the brook and scared the musquash and the trout. It was one of those afternoons which seem indefinitely long before one, in which many events may happen, a large portion of our natural life, though it was already half spent when I started. By the way there came up a shower, which compelled me to stand half an hour under a pine, piling boughs over my head, and wearing my handkerchief for a shed; and when at length I had made one cast over the pickerel-weed, standing up to my middle

in water, I found myself suddenly in the shadow of a cloud, and the thunder began to rumble with such emphasis that I could do no more than listen to it. The gods must be proud, thought I, with such forked flashes to rout a poor unarmed fisherman. So I made haste for shelter to the nearest hut, which stood half a mile from any road, but so much the nearer to the pond, and had long been uninhabited: —

> 'And here a poet builded,
> In the completed years,
> For behold a trivial cabin
> That to destruction steers.'

So the Muse fables. But therein, as I found, dwelt now John Field, an Irishman, and his wife, and several children, from the broad-faced boy who had assisted his father at his work, and now came running to his side from the bog to escape the rain, to the wrinkled, Sibyl-like, cone-headed infant that sat upon its father's knee as in the palaces of nobles, and looked out from its home in the midst of wet and hunger inquisitively upon the stranger, with the privilege of infancy, not knowing but it was the last of a noble line, and the hope and cynosure of the world, instead of John Field's poor starveling brat. There we sat together under that part of the roof which leaked the least, while it showered and thundered without. I had sat there many times of old before the ship was built that

floated this family to America. An honest, hard-working, but shiftless man plainly was John Field; and his wife, she too was brave to cook so many successive dinners in the recesses of that lofty stove; with round greasy face and bare breast, still thinking to improve her condition one day; with the never-absent mop in one hand, and yet no effects of it visible anywhere. The chickens, which had also taken shelter here from the rain, stalked about the room like members of the family, too humanized, methought, to roast well. They stood and looked in my eye or pecked at my shoe significantly. Meanwhile my host told me his story, how hard he worked 'bogging' for a neighboring farmer, turning up a meadow with a spade or bog-hoe at the rate of ten dollars an acre and the use of the land with manure for one year, and his little broad-faced son worked cheerfully at his father's side the while, not knowing how poor a bargain the latter had made. I tried to help him with my experience, telling him that he was one of my nearest neighbors, and that I too, who came a-fishing here, and looked like a loafer, was getting my living like himself; that I lived in a tight, light, and clean house, which hardly cost more than the annual rent of such a ruin as his commonly amounts to; and how, if he chose, he might in a month or two build himself a palace of his own; that I did not use tea, nor coffee, nor

butter, nor milk, nor fresh meat, and so did not have to work to get them; again, as I did not work hard, I did not have to eat hard, and it cost me but a trifle for my food; but as he began with tea, and coffee, and butter, and milk, and beef, he had to work hard to pay for them, and when he had worked hard he had to eat hard again to repair the waste of his system,—and so it was as broad as it was long; indeed, it was broader than it was long, for he was discontented and wasted his life into the bargain; and yet he had rated it as a gain in coming to America, that here you could get tea, and coffee, and meat every day. But the only true America is that country where you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to do without these, and where the State does not endeavor to compel you to sustain the slavery and war and other superfluous expenses which directly or indirectly result from the use of such things. For I purposely talked to him as if he were a philosopher, or desired to be one. I should be glad if all the meadows on the earth were left in a wild state, if that were the consequence of men's beginning to redeem themselves. A man will not need to study history to find out what is best for his own culture. But, alas! the culture of an Irishman is an enterprise to be undertaken with a sort of moral bog hoe. I told him that, as he worked so hard at bogging, he required thick boots and stout

clothing, which yet were soon soiled and worn out, but I wore light shoes and thin clothing, which cost not half so much, though he might think that I was dressed like a gentleman (which, however, was not the case), and in an hour or two, without labor, but as a recreation, I could, if I wished, catch as many fish as I should want for two days, or earn enough money to support me a week. If he and his family would live simply, they might all go a huckleberrying in the summer for their amusement. John heaved a sigh at this, and his wife stared with arms akimbo, and both appeared to be wondering if they had capital enough to begin such a course with, or arithmetic enough to carry it through. It was sailing by dead reckoning to them, and they saw not clearly how to make their port so; therefore, I suppose they still take life bravely, after their fashion, face to face, giving it tooth and nail, not having skill to split its massive columns with any fine entering wedge, and route it in detail; thinking to deal with it roughly, as one should handle a thistle. But they fight at an overwhelming disadvantage, — living, John Field, alas! without arithmetic, and failing so.

"'Do you ever fish?' I asked. 'Oh, yes, I catch a mess now and then when I am lying by; good perch I catch.' 'What 's your bait?' 'I catch shiners with fish worms, and bait the perch with them.' 'You 'd

better go now, John,' said his wife, with glistening and hopeful face; but John demurred.

"The shower was now over, and a rainbow above the eastern woods promised a fair evening; so I took my departure. When I had got without I asked for a dish, hoping to get sight of the well bottom, to complete my survey of the premises; but there, alas! are shallows and quicksands, and rope broken withal, and bucket irrecoverable. Meanwhile, the right culinary vessel was selected, water was seemingly distilled, and after consultation and long delay passed out to the thirsty one,—not yet suffered to cool, not yet to settle. Such gruel sustains life here, I thought; so, shutting my eyes, and excluding the motes by a skillfully directed under-current, I drank to genuine hospitality the heartiest draught I could. I am not squeamish in such cases when manners are concerned.

"As I was leaving the Irishman's roof after the rain, bending my steps again to the pond, my haste to catch pickerel, wading in retired meadows, in sloughs and bog holes, in forlorn and savage places, appeared for an instant trivial to me who had been sent to school and college. But as I ran down the hill toward the reddening west, with the rainbow over my shoulder, and some faint tinkling sounds borne to my ear through the cleansed air, from I know not what quarter, my Good Genius seemed to say, Go fish and hunt far

and wide day by day,—farther and wider,—and rest thee by many brooks and hearth sides without misgiving. Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before the dawn, and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee everywhere at home. There are no larger fields than these, no worthier games than may here be played. Grow wild according to thy nature, like these sedges and brakes, which will never become English hay. Let the thunder rumble; what if it threaten ruin to farmers' crops? that is not its errand to thee. Take shelter under the cloud, while they flee to carts and sheds. Let not to get a living be thy trade, but thy sport. Enjoy the land, but own it not. Through want of enterprise and faith men are where they are, buying and selling, and spending their lives like serfs.

"O Baker Farm!

> 'Landscape where the richest element
> Is a little sunshine innocent.' * *
>
> 'No one runs to revel
> On thy rail-fenced lea.' * *
>
> 'Debate with no man hast thou,
> With questions art never perplexed,
> As tame at the first sight as now,
> In thy plain russet gabardine dressed.' * *
>
> 'Come ye who love,
> And ye who hate
> Children of the Holy Dove,

> And Guy Faux of the State,
> And hang conspiracies
> From the tough rafters of the trees.'

"Men come tamely home at night only from the next field or street, where their household echoes haunt, and their life pines because it breathes its own breath over again; their shadows morning and evening reach farther than their daily steps. We should come home from far, from adventures, and perils, and discoveries every day with new experiences and character.

"Before I had reached the pond some fresh impulse had brought out John Field, with altered mind, letting go 'bogging' ere this sunset. But he, poor man, disturbed only a couple of fins while I was catching a fair string, and he said it was his luck; but when we changed seats in the boat luck changed seats too. Poor John Field! — I trust he does not read this, unless he will improve by it,—thinking to live by some derivative old-country mode in this primitive new country,— to catch perch with shiners. It is good bait sometimes, I allow. With his horizon all his own, yet he a poor man, born to be poor, with his inherited Irish poverty or poor life, his Adam's grandmother and boggy ways, not to rise in this world, he nor his posterity, till their wading, webbed, bog-trotting feet get *taloria* to their heels."

His character of the 'landlord,' generalized from observation and contact with many specimens of the

class, may be cited here, as it might in itself suffice to render nugatory henceforth the charges of asceticism, morbidity, and lack of humor and healthy sympathy: —

"Who has not imagined to himself a country inn, where the traveller shall really feel *in*, and at home, and at his public house, who was before at his private house; whose host is indeed a *host*, and a *lord* of the *land*, a self appointed brother of his race; called to this place, besides, by all the winds of heaven and his good genius, as truly as the preacher is called to preach; a man of such universal sympathies, and so broad and genial a human nature, that he would fain sacrifice the tender but narrow ties of private friendship to a broad, sunshiny, fair-weather-and-foul friendship for his race; who loves men, not as a philosopher, with philanthropy, nor as an overseer of the poor, with charity, but by a necessity of his nature, as he loves dogs and horses; and, standing at his open door from morning till night, would fain see more and more of them come along the highway, and is never satiated. To him the sun and moon are but travellers, the one by day and the other by night; and they, too, patronize his house. To his imagination all things travel save his sign-post and himself; and though you may be his neighbor for years, he will show you only the civilities of the road. But on the other hand, while nations and individuals are alike selfish and exclusive, he

loves all men equally; and if he treats his nearest neighbor as a stranger, since he has invited all nations to share his hospitality, the farthest travelled is in some measure kindred to him who takes him into the bosom of his family.

"He keeps a house of entertainment at the sign of the Black Horse or the Spread Eagle, and is known far and wide, and his fame travels with increased radius every year. All the neighborhood is in his interest, and if the traveller ask how far to a tavern, he receives some such answer as this: 'Well, sir, there's a house about three miles from here, where they have n't taken down their sign yet; but it's only ten miles to Slocum's, and that's a capital house both for man and beast.' At three miles he passes a cheerless barrack, standing desolate behind its sign post, neither public nor private, and has glimpses of a discontented couple who have mistaken their calling. At ten miles see where the tavern stands,—really an *entertaining* prospect,—so public and inviting that only the rain and snow do not enter. It is no gay pavilion, made of bright stuffs, and furnished with nuts and gingerbread, but as plain and sincere as a caravansary; located in no Tarrytown, where you receive only the civilities of commerce, but far in the fields it exercises a primitive hospitality, amid the fresh scent of new hay and raspberries, if it be summer

time, and the tinkling of cowbells from invisible pastures; for it is a land flowing with milk and honey, and the newest milk courses in a broad, deep stream across the premises.

"In these retired places the tavern is first of all a house,—elsewhere, last of all,—or never, and warms and shelters its inhabitants. It is as simple and sincere in its essentials as the caves in which the first men dwelt, but it is also as open and public. The traveller steps across the threshold, and lo! he, too, is master, for he only can be called proprietor of the house here who behaves with most propriety in it. The landlord stands clear back in nature, to my imagination, with his axe and spade, felling trees and raising potatoes with the vigor of a pioneer; with Promethean energy making nature yield her increase to supply the wants of so many; and he is not so exhausted nor of so short a stride but that he comes forward even to the highway to this wide hospitality and publicity. Surely, he has solved some of the problems of life. He comes in at his back door, holding a log, fresh cut for the hearth, upon his shoulder with one hand, while he greets the newly arrived traveller with the other.

"Here at length we have free range, as not in palaces, nor cottages, nor temples, and intrude nowhere. All the secrets of housekeeping are exhibited to the

eyes of men, above and below, before and behind. This is the necessary way to live, men have confessed, in these days, and shall he skulk and hide? and why should we have any serious disgust at kitchens? Perhaps they are the holiest recess of the house. There is the hearth, after all,—and the settle, and the fagots, and the kettle, and the crickets. We have pleasant reminiscences of these. They are the heart, the left ventricle, the very vital part of the house. Here the real and sincere life which we meet in the streets was actually fed and sheltered. Here burns the taper that cheers the lonely traveller by night, and from this hearth ascend the smokes that populate the valley to his eyes by day. On the whole, a man may not be so little ashamed of any other part of his house, for here is his sincerity and earnest, at least. It may not be here that the besoms are plied most,—it is not here that they need to be, for dust will not settle on the kitchen floor more than in nature.

"Hence it will not do for the landlord to possess too fine a nature. He must have health above the common accidents of life, subject to no modern fashionable diseases; but no taste, rather a vast relish or appetite. His sentiments on all subjects will be delivered as freely as the wind blows; there is nothing private or individual in them, though still original, but they are public, and of the hue of the heavens over

his house,— a certain out-of-door obviousness and transparency not to be disputed. What he does, his manners are not to be complained of, though abstractly offensive, for it is what man does, and in him the race is exhibited. When he eats, he is liver and bowels, and the whole digestive apparatus to the company, and so all admit the thing is done. He must have no idiosyncrasies, no particular bent or tendencies to this or that, but a general, uniform, and healthy development, such as his portly person indicates, offering himself equally on all sides to men. He is not one of your peaked and inhospitable men of genius, with particular tastes, but, as we said before, has one uniform relish, and taste which never aspires higher than a tavern sign, or the cut of a weather cock. The man of genius, like a dog with a bone, or the slave who has swallowed a diamond, or a patient with the gravel, sits afar and retired, off the road, hangs out no sign of refreshment for man and beast, but says, by all possible hints and signs, I wish to be alone — good-bye — farewell. But the landlord can afford to live without privacy. He entertains no private thought, he cherishes no solitary hour, no Sabbath day, but thinks,— enough to assert the dignity of reason,— and talks, and reads the newspaper. What he does not tell to one traveller, he tells to another. He never wants to be alone, but sleeps, wakes, eats, drinks,

sociably, still remembering his race. He walks abroad through the thoughts of men, and the Iliad and Shakespeare are tame to him, who hears the rude but homely incidents of the road from every traveller. The mail might drive through his brain in the midst of his most lonely soliloquy without disturbing his equanimity, provided it brought plenty of news and passengers. There can be no *pro*-fanity where there is no fane behind, and the whole world may see quite round him. Perchance his lines have fallen to him in dustier places, and he has heroically sat down where two roads meet, or at the Four Corners, or the Five Points, and his life is sublimely trivial for the good of men. The dust of travel blows ever in his eyes, and they preserve their clear, complacent look. The hourlies and half-hourlies, the dailies and weeklies, whirl on well-worn tracks, round and round his house, as if it were the goal in the stadium, and still he sits within in unruffled serenity, with no show of retreat. His neighbor dwells timidly behind a screen of poplars and willows, and a fence with sheaves of spears at regular intervals, or defended against the tender palms of visitors by sharp spikes,—but the traveller's wheels rattle over the door-step of the tavern, and he cracks his whip in the entry. He is truly glad to see you, and sincere as the bull's-eye over the door. The traveller seeks to find, wherever he goes, some one who

will stand in this broad and catholic relation to him, who will be an inhabitant of the land to him a stranger, and represent its human nature, as the rock stands for its inanimate nature; and this is he. As his crib furnishes provender for the traveller's horse, and his larder provisions for his appetite, so his conversation furnishes the necessary aliment to his spirits. He knows very well what a man wants, for he is a man himself, and, as it were, the farthest travelled, though he has never stirred from his door. He understands his needs and destiny. He would be well fed and lodged, there can be no doubt, and have the transient sympathy of a cheerful companion, and of a heart which always prophesies fair weather. And, after all, the greatest men even want much more of the sympathy which every honest fellow can give than that which the great only can impart. If he is not the most upright, let us allow him this praise, that he is the most downright of men. He has a hand to shake and to be shaken, and takes a sturdy and unquestionable interest in you, as if he had assumed the care of you; but if you will break your neck, he will even give you the best advice as to the method.

"The great poets have not been ungrateful to their landlords. Mine host of the Tabard Inn, in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, was an honor to his profession: —

> 'A semely man our Hoste was with alle,
> For to han been an marshal in an halle.
> A large man he was, with eyen stepe;
> A fairer burgeis is ther non in Chepe:
> Bold of his speche, and wise, and well ytaught,
> And of manhood him lacked righte naught.
> Eke thereto, was he right a mery man,
> And after souper plaien he began,
> And spake of mirthe amonges other thinges,
> Whan that we hadden made our reckoninges.'

He is a true house-band, and the centre of the company, — of greater fellowship and practical social talent than any. He it is that proposes that each shall tell a tale to wile away the time to Canterbury, and leads them himself, and concludes with his own tale: —

> 'Now by my fader's soule that is ded,
> But ye be mery, smiteth of my hed;
> Hold up your hondes withouten more speche.'

"If we do not look up to the landlord, we look round for him on all emergencies, for he is a man of infinite experience, who unites hands with wit. He is a more public character than a statesman, a publican, and not consequently a sinner; and surely he, if any, should be exempted from taxation and military duty.

"Talking with our host is next best and instructive to talking with one's self. It is a more conscious soliloquy, as it were, to speak generally, and try what we would say provided we had an audience. He has indulgent and open ears and does not require petty

and particular statements. 'Heigho!' exclaims the traveller. 'Them 's my sentiments,' thinks mine host, and stands ready for what may come next, expressing the purest sympathy by his demeanor. 'Hot as blazes!' says the other. 'Hard weather, sir,—not much stirring nowadays,' says he. He is wiser than to contradict his guest in any case; he lets him go on, he lets him travel.

"The latest sitter leaves him standing far in the night, prepared to live right on, while suns rise and set, and his 'good night' has as brisk a sound as his 'good morning;' and the earliest riser finds him tasting his liquors in the bar ere flies begin to buz, with a countenance fresh as the morning star over the sanded floor,—and not as one who had watched all night for travellers. And yet, if beds be the subject of conversation, it will appear that no man has been a sounder sleeper in his time.

"Finally, as for his moral character, we do not hesitate to say that he has no grain of vice or meanness in him, but represents just that degree of virtue which all men relish without being obliged to respect. He is a good man, as his bitters are good,—an unquestionable goodness. Not what is called a good man,—good to be considered, as a work of art in galleries and museums,—but a good fellow, that is good to be associated with. Who ever thought of the religion of an inn-

keeper,—whether he was joined to the church, partook of the sacrament, said his prayers, feared God, or the like? No doubt he has had his experience, has felt a change, and is a firm believer in the perseverance of the saints. In this last, we suspect, does the peculiarity of his religion consist. But he keeps an inn, and not a conscience. How many fragrant charities and sincere social virtues are implied in this daily offering of himself to the public. He cherishes good will to all, and gives the wayfarer as good and honest advice to direct him on his road as the priest."

There is humor, too, in the account of that poor inoffensive pauper who figures among his visitors at Walden, declaring with effusive honesty that he is deficient in intellect, always was, and the Lord made him so; no less than in that of the *bores*, of whom he declares: —

> "These are the folks that worry the man
> That lives in the house that I built."

Nor should the picture of the drunken Dutchman at Patchogue be forgotten for its humorous touches.

As he walked along the woodpaths, picking the varied berries that adorn nature's untrimmed hedges, men were not thrust from his thoughts; his imagination was ever finding symbols for a truer and deeper union of man and nature. The simplest hint sufficed: —

"Along the wood paths vines of all kinds and

qualities, of noblest vintages, are bottled up in the skins of countless berries, for the taste of men and animals. *To men they seem offered not so much for food as for sociality*, that they may pic-nic with nature. Diet drinks, cordial wines we pluck and eat in remembrance of her; the *not*-forbidden fruits which no serpent tempts us to taste."

If Thoreau was an egotist, a stoic, disgusted with society and escaping from it, does he not admirably recover tone at the touch of genuine human nature? To him, too, had come the utter weariness of frivolity and interchange of compliments that mean nothing, —'the greetings where no kindness is,' of which Wordsworth expressed such horror;—the sad repulsion from life in its manifold disguises, and from individual character in its duplicities and perversities;—the hopeless desire to escape into some solitude apart, which has been the craving, at one time or other, of the greater and tenderer souls in all ages. Some, in a fever of despair, have finally escaped into fixed cynicism and hate, venturing no more or desiring no more, to climb up and to gaze, as it were, through the narrow prison bars if perchance another heart would for a moment reveal itself in sympathy and helpfulness; some, again, have settled down on the lees, and, hopelessly accepting the world as it is, have made it an instrument to work with, and to rise up

by, to a more dreary isolation still; and some, by faithful converse with Nature, have found a restoring charm by which they have been able to fortify themselves,—the sweet belief that in every man, however muffled and concealed by sophistications, there lies the 'unsophisticated man' with possibilities of late unfolding and renewal. Thoreau was pre-eminently such. He believed in the unsophisticated man, and was unwearied in the search after him. What if such should be his meaning in this fine passage,—a bit of experience disguised in parable?—

"I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves."

Thus he figures naively the ideal for which he seeks. But he embodies his thought in plainest words also: "If within the sophisticated man there is not an unsophisticated one, then he is but one of the devil's angels. As we grow old we live more coarsely, we relax a little in our disciplines, and to some extent cease to obey our finest instincts." But he never lost faith,—he persisted in his search; and when he "helped

a runaway slave on the way to the North star," he confessed that it stirred a finer thrill in him than even the reading of Homer. The simple and unaffected revelation of genuine and honest impulse he welcomed wherever he could find it. But he always wished to take the straitest road, and to shun by-paths, to use which was altogether against his principle. He celebrates, with the finest enthusiasm, the manner in which his simplicity and self-chosen poverty protected him, precisely as St. Francis might have done six centuries before:—

"I was never molested by any person. . . . I had no lock or bolt but for the desk which held my papers, nor even a nail put over my latch or windows. I never fastened the door night or day, though I was to be absent several days; not even when I spent a fortnight in the woods of Maine. And yet my house was more respected than if it had been surrounded by a file of soldiers. The tired rambler could rest and warm himself by my fire, the literary amuse himself with the few books on my table, or the curious — by opening my closet door — see what was left of my dinner, and what prospect I had of a supper. Yet, though many people of every class came this way to the pond, I suffered no serious inconvenience from these sources, and I never missed anything but one small book — a volume of Homer, — which, perhaps,

was improperly gilded, and this I trust a soldier of our camp has found by this time. I am convinced that, if all men were to live as simply as I then did, thieving and robbery would be unknown."

But the evil lies precisely here, that men will, by the excitements of unreal pleasure and thirst for fame or gain, unfit themselves for his society, and for sharing his delights. Therefore he condemns society for the demands it thus makes on that which is sacred to the individual. Surely, the note of sincerity sounds clearly through this passage:—

"Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy, and tremble too much for that. . . . The laboring man has no time to be anything but a machine. How can he remember well his ignorance — which his growth requires — who has so often to use his knowledge? We should feed and clothe him gratuitously sometimes, and recruit him with our cordials before we judge of him. The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly."

He would have given his fullest and most unquali-

fied assent to Mr. Matthew Arnold's suggestive verses in "Obermann Once More":—

> "But we, brought forth and reared in hours
> Of change, alarm, surprise—
> *What shelter to grow ripe is ours?*
> *What leisure to grow wise?*
>
> Like children bathing on the shore,
> Buried a wave beneath,
> The second wave succeeds before
> We have had time to breathe."

Only, for himself, Thoreau escaped from the crowd, from the wave, from the change, the alarm, the surprise, to find the "leisure to grow wise," if some would say he failed to find the "shelter to grow ripe."

The morbid or sentimental temper is quite alien from all this. It effects a desire for simplicity and solitude; but it shrinks from the touch of rude natures. It loves them not. It is, at basis, full of self-pity, and is subject to reactions. Steady, agreeable, self-sufficing effort is strange to it. It dotes on the opinion of those whom it professes to hold in slight esteem. It is capricious, touchy, seldom associated with healthy frankness of speech. It is the poor slave of a sympathy which yet it would fain appear to set aside and despise. Brusqueness it dislikes; and it is now affectedly subdued and now violent. It regards no superior; but is mock-humble in self-revelation, and is at the very antipodes of hero-worship. The sentimental-

ist is his own hero, and to find another were to yield up his claims and character. Rousseau shows us all this in fullest measure. He is the typical sentimentalist,—morbid, concerned with himself as subject; if he ever objectifies his own mind, it is at once to admire and to pity himself in it. How different is all this from Thoreau, who escaped from the very influences which Rousseau courted, intent only on reaching those truer laws of human relation, of which all social customs and legislative enactments are but the symbols, and without contact with which they wither and die, like flowers cut from their roots in the earth. Rousseau confessed to a "delight in the world of imagination, and a disgust with the real world, that gave rise to that love of solitude which never left him. This disposition, apparently so misanthropic and so melancholy, he thought in reality proceeded from a heart all too fond, too loving, too tender; a heart which, failing to find real beings with whom to sympathize, was fain to feed on fictions." "The beings of my imagination," he wrote, "disgust me with all the society I have left."

Thoreau did not much regard the beings of imagination, and certainly his retreat from society was not due to their fascinations. He had considerable humor, but little phantasy, and loved those traits that told of the honest earth, and revealed the links between the

human and the brute. These were lost through the pressure of mechanical and artificial conventions, and life was sacrificed. Whatever of worth there was in man could best unfold itself amid freedom from such restraints; and therefore he waged war against all social conventions, however honored, that tended to make men machines, and to efface those natural instincts which rendered possible the enjoyments that in more primitive times were shared by all alike. But here he is not alone. Nearly all the poets and thinkers, to whom humanity owes most, have been subject to the same thought and influence, and not all of them have wrought it out to such clear and practical issues as he did.

Thus we see how Thoreau, the so-called egotist and morbid solitary, could become the faithful champion of Captain John Brown. That heroic spirit had stood between the laws and the spirit of the law, in view of which the Fathers of American Independence had drawn up their famous Declaration and the Constitution; and, instead of Thoreau being untrue to any particular deliverance, his action on John Brown's behalf simply illumined and reconciled all that had before seemed contradictory in his utterances.

Thoreau went to the woods, as he says, because he wished to live deliberately, and to front only the *essential* facts of life, and see if he could learn what it had

to teach. In great measure he realized what he desired. The following passage exhibits his own view of his purposes: —

"It would be some advantage *to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization*, if only to learn what are the gross necessaries of life, and what methods have been taken to obtain them; or even to look over the old day-books of the merchants, to see what it was that men most commonly bought at the stores, what they stored; that is, what are the grossest groceries. For the improvements of ages have had but little influence on the essential law of man's existence; as our skeletons probably are not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors. . . . Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind. With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meagre life than the poor. . . . The luxuriously rich are not simply kept comfortably warm, but unnaturally hot; they are cooked, of course *à la mode*. Of a life of luxury the fruit is luxury. There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but no philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a

school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically. The success of great scholars and thinkers is commonly a courtier-like success. They make shift to live merely by conformity, practically as their fathers did, and are in no sense the progenitors of a nobler race of men."

Elsewhere he exclaims: —

"We underpin our houses with granite; what of our habits, our lives? They rest on a rotten structure, and we all confess it. I often accuse my finest acquaintance of an immense frivolity; for, while there are manners and compliments we do not meet, we do not teach one another the lessons of honesty and sincerity that the brutes do, or of steadiness and solitude that the rocks do. The fault is commonly mutual, however; for we do not habitually demand any more of each other."

And yet he is resolutely economic, — combines with his transcendental manner of viewing things a rigorous economical practice which would please Mr. Carlyle. He never throws a thing away till he has tried it for every purpose he can think of. His economic hints, indeed, have sometimes a special value, at once commercial and physiological. At one place, for example, he says: —

"Every New Englander might easily raise all his own breadstuffs in this land of rye and Indian corn, and not depend on distant or fluctuating markets for them. Yet so far are we from simplicity and independence that, in Concord, fresh and sweet meal is rarely sold in the shops, and hominy and corn, in a still coarser form, are hardly used by any. For the most part, the farmer gives to his cattle and hogs the grain of his own producing, and buys flour — which is, at least, no more wholesome — at greater cost, at the store."

But these inferior economies he himself would be the first to denounce were they followed for themselves alone, and for what he thinks the mad whim of accumulation merely. He values his savings, because by them he can purchase higher pleasures. He works with his hand for one day a week, and rejoices in his wages, because with them he can command the leisure to observe and meditate and study for the other six. If you earn money and nothing else by your work, he holds that you are neither happy nor fortunate. In his essay on "Life without Principle" he writes: "To have done anything by which you earned money *merely* is to have been truly idle or worse. If the laborer gets no more than the wages which his employer pays him, he is cheated, he cheats himself. . . . . Those services which the community will most

readily pay for, it is most disagreeable to render. You are paid for being something less than a man. The State does not commonly reward a genius any more wisely. Even the poet laureate would rather not have to celebrate the accidents of royalty. He must have his pipe of wine, and perhaps another poet is called away from his muse to gauge that very pipe. As for my own business, even that kind of surveying which I could do with most satisfaction, my employers do not want. They would prefer that I should do my work coarsely and not too well, ay, not well enough. When I observe that there are different ways of surveying, my employer commonly asks which will give him the most land, not which is most correct. I once invented a rule for measuring cord-wood, and tried to introduce it in Boston; but the measurer there told me that the sellers did not wish to have their wood measured correctly,—that he was already too accurate for them, and therefore they commonly got their wood measured in Charlestown before crossing the bridge. . . . If a man walk in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen. As if a town had no interest in its forests but to cut them down!

"If I should sell both my forenoons and afternoons to society, as most appear to do, I am sure that for me there would be nothing left worth living for. I trust that I shall never thus sell my birthright for a mess of pottage. I wish to suggest that a man may be very industrious and yet not spend his time well. There is no more fatal blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living. You must get your living by loving, else your life is at least half a failure. As it is said of the merchants that ninety-seven in a hundred fail, so the life of men generally, tried by this standard, is a failure, and bankruptcy may be surely prophesied. . . . . The ways in which most men get their living, that is, live, are mere make-shifts, and a shirking of the real business of life,— chiefly because they do not know, but partly because they do not mean 'better.'"

His was a protest against all the artificialities through which men become hypocrites to gain some immediate end; and, like Thackeray, he was apt at finding out the weak point,— only, instead of prolonging observation for purposes of art, he was consistent, and said he would have none of it.

He held that continual compliance unnerved men in general, acting on them precisely as certain kinds of artificial life act on animals, and rendering them tor-

pid, unequal to face the open air, and incapable of true and genuine attachments: —

"If you seek the warmth of affection from a similar motive to that from which cats and dogs and slothful persons hug the fire, because your temperature is lost through sloth, you are on the downward road. Better the cold affection of the sun, reflected from fields of ice and snow, or his warmth in some still wintry dell. Warm your body by healthful exercise, not by cowering over a stove. Warm your spirit by performing independently noble deeds, not by ignobly seeking the sympathy of your fellows, who are no better than yourself."

The greatest danger to society itself, in his idea, lay in the increase of this artificializing and hot-bed process. Even to exist, it must be continually recruited and strengthened by fresh streams poured into it. Whenever society in a crisis has needed regeneration, it has come, if it has come at all, from those who had been despised or reckoned contemptible under its degenerate form. In his essay on "Civil Disobedience" he mourns that men serve the State merely as machines, — not with their souls, but with their bodies; that a judge who draws his pension and pronounces unjust judgment on the innocent is but like a miserable wretch who, in his last extreme of need, sells himself to be shot at. And yet how sane and clear he is on

the practical reserves and compromises that may consist with conscience. His reformers are men with no reserves. He says:—

"It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous, wrong,—he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it; and, if he give it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon other men's shoulders. I must get off him first that he may pursue his contemplations."

And as he did not retire to Walden to escape men, but to learn the secrets of *essential* relationship, so he escaped from the atmosphere of the circulating library to read in a truer mood, and in the light of a simpler experience, the few great books which circulate round the world. It would indeed be wholly wrong to leave on the reader's mind an impression that in this respect his interests narrowed as he got more and more *en rapport* with nature. The great masterpieces, ancient and modern, he held in truest regard. Indeed, it has been urged against him as a fault, that he allowed himself to be too directly influenced by Carlyle and by Emerson. Considering the keen social instinct,—the passion for dealing directly

with the minds and sympathies of men, which informs the writings of both, causing them in a special way to rank as social and moral reformers, this is an odd charge to raise at the same time that Thoreau is blamed for morbidity and lack of interest in ordinary human concerns. The variety of his interests, indeed, surprises one who comes fresh from the perusal of these criticisms to his books. He did not forget his classics even; and though he had an utter horror of pedantry and dry facts, one of his works begun at Walden, and finished immediately after his return from it, was a prose translation of the "Prometheus Bound," which was published in the *Dial*, in 1849, and which, as Professor Felton urges, has peculiar merits of its own.

"To read well," he says, "that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. Books must be read as deliberately as they were written." A large and liberal simplicity and escape from pre-occupation is essential to it. So, at Walden, he had Homer before him, but he read only a page or two at a time; for he says, "the works of the great poets have only been read for most part as the multitude read the stars, at most, astrologically, not astronomically."

Of fine sayings his own books are literally full. No more dainty fancy, or power of exactly presenting

the image of what lay in his own mind, has any recent writer possessed in greater measure. And a sudden humor, like summer lightning, often plays over his writings. We could easily fill many pages; let these few sentences suffice: —

"The keeping of bees is like the directing of sunbeams." ("Paradise [to be] Regained.")

"I say beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes."

"You must have stout legs to get noticed at all by Carlyle. . . . . He indicates a depth which he neglects to fathom."

"The man who goes alone can start today; but he who travels with another must wait till that other is ready, and it may be a long time before they get off."

"The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or, perchance, a palace or temple on the earth, and at length the middle-aged man concludes to build a wood shed with them."

"The blue bird carries the sky on his back."

"The tanager flies through the green foliage as if he would ignite the leaves."

"If I wish for a horse hair for my compass sight, I must go to the stable; but the hair bird, with her sharp eyes, goes to the road."

"Nature made ferns for pure leaves, to show what she could do in that line."

"No tree has so fair a bole and so handsome an instep as the beech."

"How did these beautiful rainbow tints get into the shell of the fresh-water clam, buried in the mud at the bottom of our dark river?"

"Of what significance the things you can forget?"

"How can we expect a harvest of thought who have not had a seed time of character?"

"Only he can be trusted with gifts who can present a face of bronze to expectations."

"What is called eloquence in the forum is commonly found to be rhetoric in the study. The orator yields to the inspiration of a transient occasion, and speaks to the mob before him, to those who can *hear* him; but the writer, whose more equable life is his occasion, and who would be distracted by the event and the crowd which inspire the orator, speaks to the intellect and heart of mankind, to all in any age who can understand him."

"The art of composition is as simple as the discharge of a bullet from a rifle, and its masterpieces imply an infinitely greater force behind them. . . . We seem to have forgotten that the expression, a *liberal* education, originally meant among the Romans one worthy of *free* men; while the learning of trades and professions by which to get your livelihood merely was considered worthy of *slaves* only. But taking a

hint from the word, I would go a step farther, and say, that it is not the man of wealth, or science, or literature, who in a true sense is *liberally* educated, but only the earnest and *free* man."

"Nothing is so difficult as to help a friend in matters which do not require the aid of friendship, but only a cheap and trivial service, if your friendship wants the basis of a thorough, practical acquaintance. I stand in the friendliest relation, on social and spiritual grounds, to one who does not perceive what practical skill I have, but when he seeks my assistance in such matters, is wholly ignorant of that one whom he deals with: does not use my skill, which in such matters is much greater than his, but only my hands. I know another who, on the contrary, is remarkable for his discrimination in this respect; who knows how to make use of the talents of others, when he does not possess the same; knows when not to look after or oversee, and stops short at his man. It is a rare pleasure to serve him, which all laborers know. I am not a little pained by the other kind of treatment. It is as if, after the friendliest and most ennobling intercourse, your friend should use you as a hammer, and drive a nail with your head, all in good faith; notwithstanding that you are a tolerable carpenter, as well as his good friend, and would use a hammer cheerfully in his service. The want of perception is

a defect which all the virtues of the heart cannot supply. . . . I have a friend who wishes me to see that to be right which I know to be wrong. But if friendship is to rob me of my eyes, if it is to darken the day, I will have none of it. It should be expansive and inconceivably liberalizing in its effects. True friendship can afford true knowledge. It does not depend on darkness and ignorance. A want of discernment cannot be an ingredient in it."

In the essay on walking he says: —

"We are but faint-hearted crusades; even the walkers nowadays undertake no persevering world's-end enterprises. Our expeditions are but tours, and come round again at evening to the old hearth-side from which we set out. Half of the walk is but retracing our steps. We should go forth on the shortest walks, perchance, in the spirit of stirring adventure, never to return, — prepared to send back our embalmed hearts only as relics to our desolate kingdoms. . . . If you have paid your debts and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk."

In his poems there is often a rarity and chastity of expression and a quality such as we seldom meet with. Of their general character this may be said. They have the freshness of flowers with the earth still at their roots, though with a purity that recalls the

skies, they seem inspired by real occasions, and are far from affectedly finished. He is very free in his way of treating old metres or inventing new ones, having actually come close on anticipating Walt Whitman's peculiar movements, which he relieves by irregularly recurrent rhymes. For reasons easily guessed, however, we prefer to give here one or two cast on models more like those we are familiar with. Our first specimen is —

A FANCY.

[I have seen a bunch of violets in a glass case, tied loosely with a straw, which reminded me of myself. It is but thin soil where we stood; I have put my roots in a richer than this.]

I am a parcel of vain strivings tied
By a chance band together,
Dangling this way and that, their links
Were made too loose and wide,
Methinks,
For milder weather.

A bunch of violets without their roots,
And sorrel intermixed,
Encircled by a wisp of straw
Once coiled about their shoots—
The law
By which I'm fixed.

A nosegay which I've clutched from out
Those fair Elysian fields,
With weeds and broken stems, in haste,
Doth make the rabble rout
That waste
The day he yields.

And here I bloom for a short hour unseen,
Drinking my juices up,
With no root in the land
To keep my branches green,
But stand
In a bare cup.

Some tender buds were left upon my stem
In mimicry of life;
But, ah! the children will not know
Till time has withered them
The woe
With which they're rife.

But now I see I was not plucked for nought,
And after in Life's vase
Of glass set white I might survive,
But by a kind hand brought
Alive
To a strange place.

That stock thus thinned will soon redeem its hours,
And by another year,
Such as God knows, with freer air,
More fruits and fairer flowers
Will bear,
While I droop here.

The next shall be —

WINTER.

When Winter fringes every bough
With his fantastic wreath,
And puts the seal of silence now
Upon the leaves beneath;

When every stream in its pent-house
Goes gurgling on its way,
And in his gallery the mouse
Nibbleth the meadow hay;

Methinks the summer still is nigh,
And lurketh underneath,
As that same meadow-mouse doth lie
Snug in that last year's heath.

And if perchance the chickadee
Lisp a faint note anon,
The snow is summer's canopy,
Which she herself put on.

Fair blossoms deck the cheerful trees,
And dazzling fruits depend,
The north wind sighs a summer breeze,
The nipping frosts to fend,

Bringing glad tidings unto me,
The while I stand all ear,
Of a serene eternity,
Which need not winter fear.

Out on the silent pond straightway
The restless ice doth crack,
And pond sprites merry gambols play
Amid the deafening rack.

Eager I hasten to the vale,
As if I heard brave news,
How nature held high festival,
Which it were hard to lose.

I gambol with my neighbor ice,
And sympathizing quake,
As each new crack darts in a trice
Across the gladsome lake.

One with the cricket in the ground,
And fagot on the hearth,
Resounds the rare domestic sound
Along the forest path.

There is a bright little song to—

PENNICHOOK STREAM.

Salmon brook,
Pennichook,
Ye sweet waters of my brain,
When shall I look,
Or cast the hook,
In your waves again?

Silver eels,
Wooden creels,
These the baits that still allure,
And dragon fly
That floated by,—
May they still endure.

The next is more pensive, if more suggestive, in striking a deeper note of experience:—

MY DAWN.

Nature doth have her dawn each day,
But mine are far between:
Content I cry, for sooth to say,
Mine brightest are, I ween!

For when my sun doth deign to rise,
Though it be her noontide,
Her fairest field in shadow lies,
Nor can my light abide.

Sometimes I bask me in her day,
Conversing with my mate;
But if we interchange one ray
Forthwith her heats abate.

Through this discourse I climb and see,
As from some eastern hill,
A brighter morrow rise to me
Than lieth in her skill.

As 't were two summer days in one,
Two Sundays come together,
Our rays united make one sun
With fairest summer weather."

The following amplifies and reinforces one of the ideas developed in the above: —

DEED AND FAME.

"Away! away! away! away!
Ye have not kept your secret well,
I will abide that other day,
Those other lands ye tell.

Has time no leisure left for these
The acts that ye rehearse?
Is not eternity a lease
For better deeds than verse?

'T is sweet to hear of heroes dead,
To know them still alive,
But sweeter if we earn their bread,
And in us they survive.

Our life should feed the springs of fame
With a perennial wave,
As ocean feeds the babbling founts
Which find in it their grave.

Ye skies, drop gently round my breast,
And be my corslet blue.
Ye earth, receive my lance in rest,
My faithful charger you.

Ye stars, my spear heads in the sky,
My arrow tips ye are,—
I see the routed foemen fly,
My bright spears fixed are.

Give me an angel for a foe,
Fix now the place and time,

And straight to meet him I will go
Above the starry clime;

And with our clashing buckler's clang
The heavenly spheres shall ring,
While bright the northern lights shall hang
Beside our tourneying.

And if she lose her champion true,
Tell Heaven not despair,
For I will be her champion new,
Her fame I will repair."

The appendices to his books,—especially those to the Maine Wood,—specifying and naming every tree, shrub, and animal he met with, will be valuable to students.

Some deductions have to be made from the mere style of his speech, which is now and then too extreme. He was so intent on putting forcibly the idea that was fresh from his experience that it sometimes seemed to throw other expressions out of relation; and the only reconciling point is to be found by a reference to what he *did*. We find Mr. Channing writing:—

"In one or two of his later articles expressions crept in which might lead the reader to suspect him of moroseness, or that his old trade of school-master stuck to him. He rubbed out as perfectly as he could the more humorous part of these articles, originally a relief to their sterner features, and said, 'I cannot bear the levity. I find.' To which it was replied that it was hoped he would spare them, even to the puns;

for he sometimes indulged. As when a farmer drove up with a strange pair of long-tailed ponies, his companion asked whether such a person would not carry a Colt's revolver to protect him in the solitude, Thoreau replied that 'he did not know about that, but he saw he had a pair of revolving colts before him.' As to laughing, no one did that more or better. One was surprised to see him dance,—he had been well taught, and was a vigorous dancer; and any one who ever heard him sing 'Tom Bowling' will agree that in time and in tone he answered, and went far beyond, all expectation."

On this particular point of humor it needs but to be said that what humor he had was of quite a different order from that of the "Biglow Papers;" but the critic who could read Thoreau and not discover trace of the self-restraint that had been exercised in relation to it, and the possibility of the gentlest fun flowing from sympathy with genuine traits and contradictions in human character, wherein lies the source of humor, may certainly be recommended, with safety, to read him again.

Too much has been made of Walden as a separate episode. His experiment could have been carried on anywhere. Walden was an accident: he still carried forward his enterprise after he had left Walden, and applied his principles in manufacture, in politics, in

anti-slavery agitation. It was several years after he had left Walden that he wrote:—

"I am often reminded that if I had bestowed on me the wealth of Crœsus, my aims must be still the same, and my means essentially the same."

He tells us at the same time plainly, "It is not for a man *to put himself in opposition to society*, but to maintain himself in whatever attitude he finds himself through obedience to the laws of his own being, which will never be one of opposition to a just government. I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route and make a beaten track for ourselves. . . . I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond side. . . . I learned this, at least, by my experiment,—that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; the old laws will be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty,

nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

Which as distinctly indicates, as words of man could, that Thoreau never regarded the Walden life as final or permanent, but only as a preparation for return to other forms of life and activity.

It is beyond measure laughable to find that some of the men who are most severe on Thoreau for his stoicism and his retreat to Walden are also most severe on him for his earnest anti-slavery efforts. They blame him in one breath for being uninterested in society and his fellow-men,—nay, even disgusted with them,—and for being too earnest and too much concerned about them; for being at once a denouncer of philanthropy, and a philanthropist; for setting himself against gossip, and yet becoming an agitator. It is evident that Thoreau himself perceived some relations which they have missed, else, with his keen sense of inconsistency, he must have become his own laughing stock. And, assuredly, no man would have laughed more heartily than Thoreau at such deliverances as the following had he lived to read them,—unless, perchance, it may be Mr. Emerson who does still live to read them, and who must laugh a very sardonic

laugh indeed, as of one who is praised at his dear dead friend's expense:—

"Thoreau was, *or is*, one of the admirers or disciples of Mr. Emerson,—a man worthy of all the respect and admiration which have been showered upon his name in his own country and in England.—and of another philosopher, whom Mr. Emerson used to call the 'Purple Plato,' who had taken it into his head that men were too highly civilized,—that we none of us did justice to the primitive savageness of our nature; that we were all too much beholden to artificial aids for our comfort and happiness; and that we ran the imminent risk of losing many of the best qualities of our human nature—our watchfulness, our self-respect, our self-reliance, and our independence of mind and body—by too thick and close companionship with one another, and our dependence upon paid and other help, for offices which required no help, or which could be altogether dispensed with, with great advantage to our physical and mental health. Thoreau, it appears, went out from Boston in Massachusetts, disgusted, or fancying that he was disgusted, with the trammels and habits of civilized life, longing to be free of fine clothes and of ceremony, to build his own wigwam among the trees,—if he required a wigwam,—to produce from the soil all that was necessary for the sustenance of life, to hunt his own game, sew his own fig leaves together as

Adam and Eve did, and generally to be independent of the aid or companionship of his fellow-men. He carried out his idea to a large extent, and his book 'Walden' contained the history of his experiment, written in very choice English, and not only full of rare experience of solitary life but of admirable description of scenery and the habits of animals."

On the contrary, Thoreau never tried to rid himself of society or to be independent of human companionship. He only found out a characteristically better way than we imagine the writer of the above has yet found out of being 'not at home' to those whom he did not want to see. His intimate friends give us very different testimony. Mr. Channing assures us —

"Those who loved him never had reason to regret it. He made no useless professions, never asked one of those questions which destroy all relation; but he was on the spot at the time, and had so much of human life in his keeping that he could spare a breathing place for a friend. . . . . He served his friends sincerely and practically. In his own home he was one of those characters who may be called household treasures; always on the spot with skillful eye and hand to raise the best melons in the garden, plant the orchard with the choicest trees, act as extempore mechanic; fond of the pets, the sister's flowers, or sacred

tabby; — kittens being his favorites, he would play with them by the half hour.

"A great comfort in him, he was eminently reliable. No whim of coldness, no absorption of his time by public or private business, deprived those to whom he belonged of his kindness and affection. He was at the mercy of no caprice: of a reliable will and uncompromising sternness in his moral nature, he carried the same qualities into his relation with others, and gave them the best he had without stint."

And so Thoreau throughout life, by consistent labor and self denial, justified these words which he wrote near the close: —

"My greatest skill has been to want but little. For joy I could embrace the earth. I shall delight to be buried in it. And then I think of those among men who will know that I love them though I tell them not."

Thoreau was a naturalist because he was primarily a poet, — and hence the fitness of the title given him by Mr. Channing of 'Poet-Naturalist.' He held things by inner affinities rather than by hard classifications. Instincts and habits were ever of more account with him than the mere organs and functions whose expressions he held that these were, and nothing more. Yet he was observant of these also, and was seldom out in

a matter of fact or calculation. Correctness in details, surprising patience, and a will that nothing could defeat or embarrass, held in closest union with fine imagination, without sense of contradiction,—this was his first characteristic. His grand quality was sympathy. He came to everything with the poet's feeling, the poet's heart, the poet's eye. To observe was his joy. What pictures he can draw of wholly uninteresting places and things! What loving rapture he falls into over the commonest appearances! What new metaphors he finds lurking in ordinary sylvan occurrences! The common ongoings of nature were to him a mighty parable, and he sat some part of it to adequate music, to which we may listen with delight, and learn wisdom. And as he brought sympathy with him towards every person he met and every object he examined, so he demanded it in those he encountered, though he had an utter horror of false professions of it. Therefore, like a Scotchman in this, he was prone to hide it under brusqueness till you *knew* him. But, as flowers expand in the sun, his soul expanded in the glow of innocent delights till even his senses seemed transfigured and benignantly endowed with special sensibilities and attractions. He was fond of children, and had unusual tact with them, as is attested by every one who attended his parties. "Hermit and stoic as he was," says Emerson, "he was really fond

of sympathy and threw himself heartily and child-like into the company of young people whom he loved and whom he delighted to entertain, as he only could, with the varied and endless anecdotes of his experience in field and river. And he was always ready to lead a huckleberry party or a search for chestnuts and grapes." Yet he is always self-restrained and self-respecting. He can make a poem out of the most ordinary object, event, or incident, but he will be the last to celebrate it as such; and, while some men seek a climax, he despised rhetoric and all conscious aims at effect. This passage on telegraph posts may be taken as a specimen of his finest vein, showing his keen interest in all that concerned human progress: —

"What a recipe for preserving wood, to fill its pores with music! How this wild tree from the forest, stripped of its bark and set up here, rejoices to transmit this music. When no melody proceeds from the wire, I hear the hum within the entrails of the wood, the oracular tree, rejoicing, accumulating the prophetic fury. The resounding wood,—how much the ancients would have made of it! To have had a harp on so great a scale, girding the very earth, and played on by the winds of every latitude and longitude, and that harp were (so to speak) the manifest blessing of Heaven on a work of man's. Shall we not now add a tenth Muse to those immortal Nine, and consider

that this invention was most divinely honored and distinguished upon which the Muse has thus condescended to smile,— this magic medium of communication to mankind? To read that the ancients stretched a wire round the earth, attaching it to trees of the forest, on which they sent messages by one named Electricity, father of Lightning and Magnetism, swifter far than Mercury,— the stern commands of war and news of peace; and that the winds caused this wire to vibrate so that it emitted harp-like and Æolian music in all the lands through which it passed, as if to express the satisfaction of God in the invention! And this is fact, and yet we have attributed the instrument to no God. I hear the sound of the wood working terribly within. When I put my ear to it, anon it swells into a clear tone, which seems to concentrate in the core of the tree, for all the sound seems to proceed from the wood. It is as if you had entered some world-cathedral, resounding to some vast organ. The fibre of all things have their tension and are strained like the strings of a lyre. I feel the very ground tremble underneath my feet as I stand near the post. The wire vibrates with great force, as if it would strain and rend the wood. What an awful and fateful music it must be to the worms in the wood! No better vermifuge were needed. As the wood of an old cremona, its every fibre, perchance, harmoniously

tempered, and educated to resound melody, has brought a great price; so, methinks, these telegraph posts should bear a great price with musical-instrument makers. It is prepared to be the material of harps for ages to come,— *as it were, put a-soak, a-seasoning, in music.*"

In this remarkable passage it is not evident how keen Thoreau's instincts were for the points at which nature and human civilization meet each other with wonderful and secret but apparently long-prepared adaptations. The tree taken from the forest, stripped of its leaves, of its bark even, standing there,—straight, bare, gaunt, and clear against the sunset light,— what beauty could have lain in it for the mere naturalist? It was a relic which even his comparative anatomy could not have effectually reclothed and set in its place again. But Thoreau, because he was a poet, and a lover of man and man's progress, reclothes it with leaves of promise and prophesy,— fairer and more divine than those it had borne but for a season. He is rapt in the imagination of its possibilities; for now, like the reed which the great god Pan took from the bed of the river, and tore and cut, and pulled the pith out of, it breathes a music that hints of the sighs and tears, the joys, the aspirations, the loves and longings of men. How could a 'morbid hermit,' who had escaped, in *disgust and aversion*, not merely

from cities, and their vices, their chicanery and their craft, but from the very fellowship of men, have written that? The telegraph is civilization's epitome,— all men are represented in it, mystically but not less individually, in its possibility of conveying the record of what lies realest in their thoughts and purposes; and this 'hermit' could celebrate it; hear its prophetic music, and write a poem upon it. Nothing, indeed, that has been written shows more of penetration into modern progress and scientific law, as it bears on human well-being, — on one side it might seem *philistinic*, indeed; but how choice, how elevated, how touched with the imagination that rarifies, spiritualizes, and raises altogether above the touch of earth and the profit of the present moment! If it celebrates the last material or scientific conquest of the century, could even Mr. Matthew Arnold find fault with it, as with the self-celebrations of Mr. Bright, Mr. Roebuck and the rest, over our 'progress?' That idea of what the ancients would have made of it, and their attribution of it to some god, is full of Thoreau's character, and Mr. Matthew Arnold would accept it gladly, we firmly believe, as just and adequate.

As a piece of elevated noble natural description, with lights of true poetry interfusing it, scarce anything could be finer than this picture of a snowfall:—

"Did you ever admire the steady, silent, windless fall of the snow in some lead-colored sky, silent save the little ticking of the flakes as they touched the twigs? It is chased silver, moulded over the pines and oak leaves. Soft shades hang like curtains along the closely draped wood-paths. Frozen apples become little cider-vats. The old, crooked apple trees, frozen stiff in the pale, shivering sunlight, that appears to be dying of consumption, gleam forth like the heroes of one of Dante's cold hells: we would mind any change in the mercury of the dream. The snow crunches under the feet; the chopper's axe rings funereally through the tragic air. At early morn the frost on button-bushes and willows was silvery, and every stem and minutest twig and filamentary weed came up a silver thing, while the cottage smoke rose salmon-colored into that oblique day. At the base of ditches were shooting crystals, like the blades of an ivory-handled penknife, and rosettes and favors fretted of silver on the flat ice. The little cascades in the brook were ornamented with transparent shields, and long candelabrums and spermaceti-colored fools' caps and plated jellies and white globes, with the black water whirling along transparently underneath. The sun comes out, and all at a glance, rubies, sapphires, diamonds, and emeralds start into intense life on the angles of the snow crystals."

Again, see how Thoreau, in a kind of implied protest against a too hard scientific prescription for man's development from lower to higher, can wrap up his doctrine in humor. The following could as little have come from the mere hermit as the other but for a slightly different reason: —

"As the woodchuck dines chiefly on crickets, he will not be at much expense in seats for his winter quarters. Since the anatomical discovery that the *thymoid* gland, whose use in man is *nihil*, is for the purpose of promoting digestion during the hibernating jollifications of the woodchuck, we sympathize less at the retreat. Darwin, who hibernates in science, cannot yet have heard of this use of the above gland, or he would have derived the human race from our woodchuck, instead of landing him flat on the *Simiadæ*, or monkey."

"Nature," he says in another place, "has taken more care than the fondest parent for the education and refinement of her children. Consider the silent influence which flowers exert, no less upon the ditcher in the meadow than the lady in the bower. When I walk in the woods, I am reminded that a wise Purveyor has been there before me; my most delicate experience is typified there. I am struck with the pleasing friendships and unanimities of nature, as when the lichen on the tree takes the form of their

leaves. In the most stupendous scenes you will see delicate and fragile features, as slight wreaths of vapor, dewlines, feathery sprays, which suggest a high refinement, a noble blood and breeding, as it were. It is not hard to account for elves and fairies; they represent this light grace, this ethereal gentility. Bring a spray from the wood, or a crystal from the brook, and place it on your mantel-shelf, and your household ornaments will seem plebeian beside its nobler fashion and bearing. It will wave superior there, as if used to a more refined and polished circle. It has a salute and a response to all your enthusiasm and heroism."

He notes the face of the heavens, and exults in a fine sunset, as Turner might have done. Nay, he paints a subtle Turner word picture, as in this passage: —

"We had a remarkable sunset one day last November. I was walking in a meadow, the source of a small brook, when the sun at last, just before setting, after a cold gray day, reached a clear stratum in the horizon, and the softest, brightest morning sunlight fell on the dry grass and on the stems of the trees in the opposite horizon, and on the leaves of the shrub oaks on the hill side, while our shadows stretched long over the meadow eastward, as if we were the only motes in its beams. It was such a light as we could not have imagined a moment before, and the air also

was so warm and serene that nothing was wanting to make a paradise of that meadow. When we reflected that this was not a solitary phenomenon, never to happen again, but that it would happen for ever and ever an infinite number of evenings, and cheer and reassure the latest child that walked there, it was more glorious still.

"The sun sets on some retired meadow, where no house is visible, with all the glory and splendor that it lavishes on cities, and, perchance, as it has never set before,—where there is but a solitary marsh hawk to have his wings gilded by it, or only a musquash looks out from his cabin, and there is some little black-veined brook in the midst of the marsh, just beginning to meander, winding slowly round a decaying stump. We walked in so pure and bright a light, gilding the withered grass and leaves, so softly and serenely bright, I thought I had never bathed in such a golden flood, without a ripple or a murmur to it. The west side of every wood and rising ground gleamed like the boundary of Elysium, and the sun on our backs seemed like a gentle herdsman driving us home at evening."

He is like Charles Kingsley in his respect for the east wind, and almost worships Winter, as the great purifier and health-bringer. He is robust; has no weakness for artificial warmth, or the dull repose that comes of it.

"The wonderful purity of Nature at this season is a most pleasing fact. Every decayed stump and moss-grown stone and rail, and the dead leaves of autumn, are concealed by a clean napkin of snow. In the bare fields and tinkling woods, see what virtue survives. In the coldest and bleakest places, the warmest charities still maintain a foothold. A cold and searching wind drives away all contagion, and nothing can withstand it but what has a virtue in it; and accordingly whatever we meet with in cold and bleak places, as the tops of mountains, we respect for a sort of sturdy innocence, a Puritan toughness. All things besides seem to be called in for shelter, and what stays out must be part of the original frame of the universe, and of such valor as God himself. It is invigorating to breathe the cleansed air. Its greater fineness and purity are visible to the eye, and we would fain stay out long and late, that the gales may sigh through us, too, as through the leafless trees, and fit us for the winter,—as if we hoped so to borrow some pure and steadfast virtue, which will stead us in all seasons.

"There is a slumbering subterranean fire in Nature which never goes out, and which no cold can chill. It finally melts the great snow, and in January or July is only buried under a thicker or thinner covering. In the coldest day it flows somewhere, and the snow melts around every tree. This field of winter

rye, which sprouted late in the fall, and now speedily dissolves the snow, is where the fire is very thinly covered. We feel warmed by it. In the winter, warmth stands for all virtue, and we resort in thought to a trickling rill, with its bare stones shining in the sun, and to warm springs in the woods, with as much eagerness as rabbits and robins. The steam which rises from swamps and pools is as dear and domestic as that of our own kettle. What fire could ever equal the sunshine of a winter's day, when the meadow mice come out by the wallsides, and the chickadee lisps in the defiles of the wood? The warmth comes directly from the sun, and is not radiated from the earth, as in summer; and when we feel his beams on our backs as we are treading some snowy dell, we are grateful as for a special kindness, and bless the sun which has followed us into that by-place.

"This subterranean fire has its altar in each man's breast, for in the coldest day, and on the bleakest hill, the traveller cherishes a warmer fire within the folds of his cloak than is kindled on any hearth. A healthy man, indeed, is the complement of the seasons, and in winter summer is in his heart. There is the south. Thither have all birds and insects migrated, and around the warm springs in his breast are gathered the robin and the lark.

"At length, having reached the edge of the woods,

and shut out the gadding town, we enter within their covert as we go under the roof of a cottage, and cross its threshold, all ceiled and banked up with snow. They are glad and warm still, and as genial and cheery in winter as in summer. As we stand in the midst of the pines, in the flickering and checkered light which straggles but little way into their maze, we wonder if the towns have ever heard their simple story. It seems to us that no traveller has ever explored them, and notwithstanding the wonders which science is elsewhere revealing every day, who would not like to hear their annals? Our humble villages in the plain are their contribution. We borrow from the forest the boards which shelter and the sticks which warm us. How important is their evergreen to the winter, that portion of the summer which does not fade, the permanent year, the unwithered grass. Thus simply, and with little expense of altitude, is the surface of the earth diversified. What would human life be without forests, those natural cities? From the tops of mountains they appear like smooth shaven lawns, yet whither shall we walk but in this taller grass?

"In this glade, covered with bushes of a year's growth, see how the silvery dust lies on every seared leaf and twig, deposited in such infinite and luxurious forms as by their very variety atone for the absence of color. Observe the tiny tracks of mice around

every stem, and the triangular tracks of the rabbit. A pure elastic heaven hangs over all, as if the impurities of the summer sky, refined and shrunk by the chaste winter's cold, had been winnowed from the heavens upon the earth.

"Nature confounds her summer distinctions at this season. The heavens seem to be nearer the earth. The elements are less reserved and distinct. Water turns to ice, rain to snow. The day is but a Scandinavian night. The winter is an Arctic summer.

"How much more living is the life that is in Nature, the furred life which still survives the stinging nights, and, from amidst fields and woods covered with frost and snow, sees the sun rise.

> 'The foodless wilds
> Pour forth their brown inhabitants.'

The gray squirrel and rabbit are brisk and playful in the remote glens, even on the morning of the cold Friday. Here is our Lapland and Labrador, and for our Esquimaux and Knistenaux, Dogribbed Indians, Novazemblaites, and Spitzbergeners, are there not the ice cutter and wood chopper, the fox, muskrat, and mink?

"Still, in the midst of the Arctic day, we may trace the summer to its retreats, and sympathize with some contemporary life. Stretched over the brooks, in the midst of the frost-bound meadows, we may

observe the submarine cottages of the caddice worms, the larvæ of the Plicipennes; their small cylindrical cases built around themselves, composed of flags, sticks, grass, and withered leaves, shells, and pebbles, in form and color like the wrecks which strew the bottom,—now drifting along over the pebbly bottom, now whirling in tiny eddies and dashing down steep falls, or sweeping rapidly along with the current, or else swaying to and fro at the end of some grass blade or root. Anon they will leave their sunken habitations, and, crawling up the stems of plants, or the surface, like gnats, as perfect insects henceforth, flutter over the surface of the water, or sacrifice their short lives in the flame of our candles at evening. Down yonder little glen the shrubs are drooping under their burden, and the red alder-berries contrast with the white ground. Here are the marks of a myriad feet which have already been abroad. The sun rises as proudly over such a glen as over the valley of the Seine or the Tiber, and it seems the residence of a pure and self-subsistent valor, such as they never witnessed, which never knew defeat nor fear. Here reign the simplicity and purity of a primitive age, and a health and hope far remote from towns and cities. Standing quite alone, far in the forest, while the wind is shaking down snow from the trees, and leaving the only human tracks behind us, we find our reflections

of a richer variety than the life of cities. The chickadee and nuthatch are more inspiring society than statesmen and philosophers, and we shall return to these last as to more vulgar companions. In this lonely glen, with its brook draining the slopes, its creased ice and crystals of all hues, where the spruces and hemlocks stand up on either side, and the rush and sere wild oats in the rivulet itself, our lives are more serene and worthy to contemplate.

"As the day advances, the heat of the sun is reflected by the hill-sides, and we hear a faint but sweet music, where flows the rill released from its fetters, and the icicles are melting on the trees; and the nuthatch and partridge are heard and seen. The south wind melts the snow at noon, and the bare ground appears with its withered grass and leaves, and we are invigorated by the perfume which exhales from it as by the scent of strong meats.

"Let us go into this deserted woodman's hut and see how he has passed the long winter nights and the short and stormy days. For here man has lived under this south hill-side, and it seems a civilized and public spot. We have such associations as when the traveller stands by the ruins of Palmyra or Hecatompolis. Singing birds and flowers perchance have begun to appear here, for flowers as well as weeds follow in the footsteps of man. These hemlocks whispered over his

head, these hickory logs were his fuel, and these pitch-pine roots kindled his fire; yonder fuming rill in the hollow, whose thin and airy vapor still ascends as busily as ever, though he is far off now, was his well. These hemlock boughs and the straw upon this raised platform were his bed, and this broken dish held his drink. But he has not been here this season, for the phœbes built their nest upon this shelf last summer. I find some embers left, as if he had but just gone out, where he baked his pot of beans; and while at evening he smoked his pipe, whose stemless bowl lies in the ashes, chatted with his only companion, if perchance he had any, about the depth of the snow on the morrow, already falling fast and thick without, or disputed whether the last sound was the screech of an owl, or the creak of a bough, or imagination only; and through this broad chimney throat, in the late winter evening, ere he stretched himself upon the straw, he looked up to learn the progress of the storm, and seeing the bright stars of Cassiopeia's chair shining brightly down upon him fell contentedly asleep.

"See how many traces from which we may learn the chopper's history. From this stump we may guess the sharpness of his axe, and from the slope of the stroke on which side he stood, and whether he cut down the tree without going round it or changing hands; and from the flexure of the splinters we may

know which way it fell. This one chip contains inscribed on it the whole history of the wood-chopper and of the world. On this scrap of paper, which held his sugar or salt, perchance, or was the wadding of his gun, sitting on a log in the forest, with what interest we read the tattle of cities, of those larger huts, empty and to let, like this, in High streets and Broadways. The eves are dripping on the south side of this simple roof, while the titmouse lisps in the pine, and the genial warmth of the sun around the door is somewhat kind and human.

"After two seasons this rude dwelling does not deform the scene. Already the birds resort to it to build their nests, and you may track to its door the feet of many quadrupeds. Thus, for a long time, Nature overlooks the encroachment and profanity of man. The wood still cheerfully and unsuspiciously echoes the strokes of the axe that fells it, and while they are few and seldom they enhance its wildness, and all the elements strive to naturalize the sound.

"Now our path begins to ascend gradually to the top of this high hill, from whose precipitous south side we can look over the broad country, of forest and field and river, to the distant snowy mountains. See yonder thin column of smoke curling up through the woods from some invisible farm house, the standard raised over some rural homestead. There must be a

warmer and more genial spot there below, as where we detect the vapor from a stream forming a cloud above the trees. What fine relations are established between the traveller who discovers this airy column from some eminence in the forest and him who sits below. Up goes the smoke as silently and naturally as the vapor exhales from the leaves, and as busy disposing itself in wreaths as the housewife on the hearth below. It is a hieroglyphic of man's life, and suggests more intimate and important things than the boiling of a pot. Where its fine column rises above the forest like an ensign some human life has planted itself, — and such is the beginning of Rome, the establishment of the arts, and the foundation of empires, whether on the prairies of America or the steppes of Asia.

"And now we descend again to the brink of this woodland lake which lies in the hollow of the hills, as if it were their expressed juice, and that of the leaves, which are annually steeped in it. Without outlet or inlet to the eye, it has still its history, in the lapse of its waves, in the rounded pebbles on the shore, and in the pines which grow down to its brink. It has not been idle, though sedentary, but, like Abu Musa, teaches that 'sitting still at home is the heavenly way; the going out is the way of the world.' Yet in its evaporation it travels as far as any. In summer it is the earth's liquid eye, a mirror in the breast of Nat-

ure. The sins of the wood are washed out in it. See how the woods form an amphitheatre about it, and it is an arena for all the genialness of nature. All trees direct the traveller to its brink, all paths seek it out, birds fly to it, quadrupeds flee to it, and the very ground inclines towards it. It is Nature's saloon, where she has sat down to her toilet. Consider her silent economy and tidiness; how the sun comes with his evaporation to sweep the dust from its surface each morning, and a fresh surface is constantly welling up; and annually, after whatever impurities have accumulated herein, its liquid transparency appears again in the spring. In summer a hushed music seems to sweep across its surface. But now a plain sheet of snow conceals it from our eyes, except where the wind has swept the ice bare, and the sere leaves are gliding from side to side, tacking and veering on their tiny voyages. Here is one just keeled up against a pebble on shore, a dry beach leaf, rocking still, as if it would start again. A skillful engineer, methinks, might project its course since it fell from the parent stem. Here are all the elements for such a calculation. Its present position, the direction of the wind, the level of the pond, and how much more is given. In its scarred edges and veins is its log rolled up.

"We fancy ourselves in the interior of a larger house. The surface of the pond is a deal table or

sanded floor, and the woods rise abruptly from its edge, like the walls of a cottage. The lines set to catch pickerel through the ice look like a larger culinary preparation, and the men stand about on the white ground like pieces of forest furniture. The actions of these men, at a distance of half a mile over the ice and snow impress us as when we read the exploits of Alexander in history. They seem not unworthy of the scenery and as momentous as the conquest of kingdoms.

"Again we have wandered through the arches of the wood, until from its skirts we hear the distant booming of ice from yonder bay of the river, as if it were moved by some other and subtler tide than oceans know. To me it has a strange sound of home, thrilling as the voice of one's distant and noble kindred. A mild summer sun shines over forest and lake, and though there is but one green leaf for many rods, yet nature enjoys a serene health. Every sound is fraught with the same mysterious assurance of health, as well now the creaking of the boughs in January, as the soft sough of the wind in July."

This is how he accounts for the transportation of pine seeds: —

"In all the pines, a very thin membrane, in appearance much like an insect's wing, grows over and around the seed, and independent of it, while the

latter is being developed within its base. Indeed, this is often perfectly developed, though the seed is abortive, Nature being, you would say, more sure to provide the means of transporting the seed than to provide the seed to be transported. In other words, a beautiful thin sack is woven around the seed, with a handle to it such as the wind can take hold of, and it is then committed to the wind, expressly that it may transport the seed and extend the range of the species; and this it does as effectually as when seeds are sent by mail in a different kind of sack from the patent office. There is a patent office at the seat of government of the universe, whose managers are as much interested in the dispersion of seeds as anybody at Washington can be, and their operations are infinitely more extensive and regular.

"There is, then, no necessity for supposing that the pines have sprung up from nothing, and I am aware that I am not at all peculiar in asserting that they come from seeds, though the mode of their propagation *by Nature* has been but little attended to. They are very extensively raised from the seed in Europe, and are beginning to be here.

"When you cut down an oak wood, a pine wood will not *at once* spring up there unless there are, or have been, quite recently, seed-bearing pines near enough for the seeds to be blown from them. But,

adjacent to a forest of pines, if you prevent other crops from growing there, you will surely have an extension of your pine forest, provided the soil is suitable.

"As for the heavy seeds and nuts which are not furnished with wings, the notion is still a very common one that, when the trees which bear these spring up where none of their kind were noticed before, they have come from seeds or other principles spontaneously generated there in an unusual manner, or which have lain dormant in the soil for centuries, or perhaps been called into activity by the heat of a burning. I do not believe these assertions, and I will state some of the ways in which, according to my observation, such forests are planted and raised.

"Every one of these seeds, too, will be found to be winged or legged in another fashion. Surely, it is not wonderful that cherry trees of all kinds are widely dispersed, since their fruit is well known to be the favorite food of various birds. Many kinds are called bird cherries, and they appropriate many more kinds which are not so called. Eating cherries is a bird-like employment, and unless we disperse the seeds occasionally, as they do, I shall think that the birds have the best right to them. See how artfully the seed of a cherry is placed in order that a bird may be compelled to transport it,—in the very midst

of a tempting pericarp, so that the creature that would devour this must commonly take the stone also into its mouth or bill. If you ever ate a cherry, and did not make two bites of it, you must have perceived it, — right in the centre of the luscious morsel, a large earthy residuum left on the tongue. We thus take into our mouths cherry stones as big as peas, a dozen at once, for Nature can persuade us to do almost anything when she would compass her ends. Some wild men and children instinctively swallow these, as the birds do when in a hurry, it being the shortest way to get rid of them. Thus, though these seeds are not provided with vegetable wings, nature has impelled the thrush tribe to take them into their bills and fly away with them; and they are winged in another sense, and more effectually than the seeds of pines, for these are carried even against the wind. The consequence is that cherry trees grow not only here but there. The same is true of a great many other seeds."

And he finds also the agencies of animals in the transportation of seeds, and thus signalizes it:—

"As I walk amid hickories, even in August, I hear the sound of green pig nuts falling from time to time, cut off by the chickadee over my head. In the fall I noticed on the ground, either within or in the neighborhood of oak woods, on all sides of the town, stout oak twigs three or four inches long, bearing half

a dozen empty acorn cups, which twigs have been gnawed off by squirrels, on both sides of the nuts, in order to make them more portable. The jays scream and the red squirrels scold while you are clubbing and shaking the chestnut trees, for they are there on the same errand, and two of a trade never agree. I frequently see a red or gray squirrel cast down a green chestnut bur, as I am going through the woods, and I used to think, sometimes, that they were cast at me. In fact, they are so busy about it, in the midst of the chestnut season, that you cannot stand long in the woods without hearing one fall. A sportsman told me that he had, the day before,—that was in the middle of October,—seen a green chestnut bur dropt on our great river meadow, fifty rods from the nearest wood, and much further from the nearest chestnut tree, and he could not tell how it came there. Occasionally, when chestnutting in midwinter, I find thirty or forty nuts in a pile, left in its gallery just under the leaves, by the common wood mouse (*mus leucopus*).

"But especially, in the winter, the extent to which this transportation and planting of nuts is carried on is made apparent by the snow. In almost every wood you will see where the red or gray squirrels have pawed down through the snow in a hundred places, sometimes two feet deep, and almost always

directly to a nut or a pine-cone, as directly as if they had started from it and bored upward,—which you and I could not have done. It would be difficult for us to find one before the snow falls. Commonly, no doubt, they had deposited them there in the fall. You wonder if they remember the localities, or discover them by the scent. The red squirrel commonly has its winter abode in the earth under a thicket of evergreens, frequently under a small clump of evergreens in the midst of a deciduous wood. If there are any nut-trees, which still retain their nuts, standing at a distance without the wood, their paths often lead directly to and from them. We, therefore, need not suppose an oak standing here and there *in* the wood in order to seed it, but if a few stand within twenty or thirty rods of it, it is sufficient.

"I think that I may venture to say that every white-pine cone that falls to the earth naturally in this town, before opening and losing its seeds, and almost every pitch-pine one that falls at all, is cut off by a squirrel, and they begin to pluck them long before they are ripe, so that when the crop of white-pine cones is a small one, as it commonly is, they cut off thus almost every one of these before it fairly ripens. I think, moreover, that their design, if I may so speak, in cutting them off green, is, partly, to prevent their opening and losing their seeds, for these

are the ones for which they dig through the snow, and the only white-pine cones which contain anything then. I have counted in one heap, within a diameter of four feet, the cores of 239 pitch-pine cones which had been cut off and stripped by the red squirrel the previous winter.

"The nuts thus left on the surface, or buried just beneath it, are placed in the most favorable circumstances for germinating. I have sometimes wondered how those which merely fell on the surface of the earth got planted; but, by the end of December, I find the chestnut of the same year partially mixed with the mould, as it were, under the decaying and mouldy leaves, where there is all the moisture and manure they want, for the nuts fall first. In a plentiful year a large proportion of the nuts are thus covered loosely an inch deep, and are, of course, somewhat concealed from squirrels. One winter, when the crop had been abundant, I got, with the aid of a rake, many quarts of these nuts as late as the tenth of January, and though some bought at the store the same day were more than half of them mouldy, I did not find a single mouldy one among these which I picked from under the wet and mouldy leaves, where they had been snowed on once or twice. Nature knows how to pack them best. They were still plump and

tender. Apparently, they do not heat there, though wet. In the spring they were all sprouting.

"Loudon says that 'when the nut [of the common walnut of Europe] is to be preserved through the winter for the purpose of planting in the following spring, it should be laid in a rot-heap, as soon as gathered, with the husk on; and the heap should be turned over frequently in the course of the winter.'

"Here, again, he is stealing Nature's 'thunder.' How can a poor mortal do otherwise? for it is she that finds fingers to steal with, and the treasure to be stolen. In the planting of the seeds of most trees, the best gardeners do no more than follow Nature, though they may not know it. Generally, both large and small ones are most sure to germinate and succeed best, when only beaten into the earth with the back of a spade, and then covered with leaves or straw. These results to which planters have arrived remind us of the experience of Kane and his companions at the North, who, when learning to live in that climate, were surprised to find themselves steadily adopting the customs of the natives, simply becoming Esquimaux. So, when we experiment in planting forests, we find ourselves at last doing as Nature does. Would it not be well to consult with Nature in the outset? for she is the most extensive and experienced planter of us all, not excepting the Dukes of Athol.

"In short, they who have not attended particularly to this subject are but little aware to what an extent quadrupeds and birds are employed, especially in the fall, in collecting, and so disseminating and planting the seeds of trees. It is the almost constant employment of the squirrels at that season, and you rarely meet with one that has not a nut in its mouth, or is not just going to get one. One squirrel hunter of this town told me that he knew of a walnut tree which bore particularly good nuts, but that on going to gather them one fall, he found that he had been anticipated by a family of a dozen red squirrels. He took out of the tree, which was hollow, one bushel and three pecks by measurement, without the husks, and they supplied him and his family for the winter. It would be easy to multiply instances of this kind. How commonly in the fall you see the cheek-pouches of the striped squirrel distended by a quantity of nuts! This species gets its scientific name *Tamias*, or the steward, from its habit of storing up nuts and other seeds. Look under a nut tree a month after the nuts have fallen, and see what proportion of sound nuts to the abortive ones and shells you will find ordinarily. They have been already eaten, or dispersed far and wide. The ground looks like a platform before a grocery, where the gossips of the village sit to crack nuts and less savory jokes. You have come, you

would say, after the feast was over, and are presented with the shells only.

"Occasionally, when threading the woods in the fall, you will hear a sound as if some one had broken a twig, and looking up see a jay pecking at an acorn, or you will see a flock of them at once about it, in the top of an oak, and hear them break them off. They then fly to a suitable limb, and placing the acorn under one foot, hammer away at it busily, making a sound like a woodpecker's tapping, looking round from time to time to see if any foe is approaching, and soon reach the meat, and nibble at it, holding up their heads to swallow, while they hold the remainder very firmly with their claws. Nevertheless, it often drops to the ground before the bird has done with it. I can confirm what Wm. Bartram wrote to Wilson, the ornithologist, that 'The jay is one of the most useful agents in the economy of nature for disseminating forest trees and other nuciferous and hard seeded vegetables of which they feed. Their chief employment during the autumnal season is foraging to supply their winter stores. In performing this necessary duty they drop abundance of seed in their flight over fields, hedges, and by fences, where they alight to deposit them in the post-holes, etc. It is remarkable what numbers of young trees rise up in fields and pastures after a wet winter and spring. These birds

alone are capable, in a few years' time, to replant all the cleared lands.'

"I have noticed that squirrels also frequently drop their nuts in open land, which will still further account for the oaks and walnuts which spring up in pastures, for, depend on it, every new tree comes from a seed. When I examine the little oaks, one or two years old, in such places, I invariably find the empty acorn from which they sprung.

"So far from the seed having lain dormant in the soil since oaks grew there before, as many believe, it is well known that it is difficult to preserve the vitality of acorns long enough to transport them to Europe; and it is recommended in Loudon's 'Arboretum,' as the safest course, to sprout them in pots on the voyage. The same authority states that 'very few acorns of any species will germinate after having been kept a year,' that beechmast 'only retains its vital properties one year,' and the black walnut 'seldom more than six months after it has ripened.' I have frequently found that in November almost every acorn left on the ground had sprouted or decayed. What with frost, drouth, moisture, and worms, the greater part are soon destroyed. Yet it is stated by one botanical writer that 'acorns that have lain for centuries, on being ploughed up, have soon vegetated.'

"Mr. George B. Emerson, in his valuable Report

on the Trees and Shrubs of this State (Massachusetts), says of the pines: 'The tenacity of life of the seeds is remarkable. They will remain for many years unchanged in the ground, protected by the coolness and deep shade of the forest above them. But when the forest is removed, and the warmth of the sun admitted, they immediately vegetate.' Since he does not tell us on what observation his remark is founded, I must doubt its truth. Besides, the experience of nurserymen makes it the more questionable.

"The stories of wheat raised from seed buried with an ancient Egyptian, and of raspberries raised from seed found in the stomach of a man in England, who is supposed to have died sixteen or seventeen hundred years ago, are generally discredited, simply because the evidence is not conclusive.

"Several men of science, Dr. Carpenter among them, have used the statement that beach plums sprang up in sand which was dug up forty miles inland in Maine, to prove that the seed had lain there a very long time, and some have inferred that the coast has receded so far. But it seems to me necessary to their argument to show, first, that beach plums grow only on a beach. They are not uncommon here, which is about half that distance from the shore; and I remember a dense patch a few miles north of us, twenty-five miles inland, from which the fruit was

annually carried to market. How much further inland they grow, I know not. Dr. Chas. T. Jackson speaks of finding 'beach plums' (perhaps they were this kind) more than one hundred miles inland in Maine."

His close observation of the wildest animals implies a kind of real brotherhood,—a patient self-identifying sympathy, as rare amongst naturalists as any other class. A passage on the muskrat and the fox may be cited in this light:—

"Frequently, in the morning or evening, a long ripple is seen in the still water, where a muskrat is crossing the stream, with only its nose above the surface, and sometimes a green bough in its mouth to build its house with. When it finds itself observed, it will dive and swim five or six rods under water, and at length conceal itself in its hole, or the weeds. It will remain under water for ten minutes at a time, and on one occasion has been seen, when undisturbed, to form an air bubble under the ice, which contracted and expanded as it breathed at leisure. When it suspects danger on shore, it will stand erect like a squirrel, and survey its neighborhood for several minutes, without moving.

"In the fall, if a meadow intervene between their burrows and the stream, they erect cabins of mud and grass, three or four feet high, near its edge. These are not their breeding places, though young are some-

times found in late freshets, but rather their hunting lodges, to which they resort in the winter with their food, and for shelter. Their food consists chiefly of flags and fresh-water muscles, the shells of the latter being left in large quantities around their lodges in the spring.

"The Penobscot Indian wears the entire skin of a muskrat, with the legs and tail dangling, and the head caught under his girdle, for a pouch, into which he puts his fishing tackle and essences to scent his traps with.

"The bear, wolf, lynx, wild-cat, deer, beaver, and marten have disappeared; the otter is rarely if ever seen here at present; and the mink is less common than formerly.

"Perhaps of all our untamed quadrupeds, the fox has obtained the widest and most familiar reputation, from the time of Pilpay and Æsop to the present day. His recent tracks still give variety to a winter's walk. I tread in the steps of the fox that has gone before me by some hours, or which perhaps I have started, with such a tiptoe of expectation, as if I were on the trail of the spirit itself which resides in the wood, and expected soon to catch it in its lair. I am curious to know what has determined its graceful curvatures, and how surely they were coincident with the fluctuations of some mind. I know which way a mind wended,

what horizon it faced, by the setting of these tracks, and whether it moved slowly or rapidly, by their greater or less intervals and distinctness; for the swiftest step leaves yet a lasting trace. Sometimes you will see the trails of many together, and where they have gambolled and gone through a hundred evolutions, which testify to a singular listlessness and leisure in nature.

"When I see a fox run across the pond in the snow, with the carelessness of freedom, or at intervals trace his course in the sunshine along the ridge of a hill, I give up to him sun and earth as to their true proprietor. He does not go in the sun, but it seems to follow him, and there is a visible sympathy between him and it. Sometimes, when the snow lies light, and but five or six inches deep, you may give chase and come up with one on foot. In such a case he will show a remarkable presence of mind, choosing only the safest direction, though he may lose ground by it. Notwithstanding his fright, he will take no step which is not beautiful. His pace is a sort of leopard canter, as if he were in nowise impeded by the snow, but were husbanding his strength all the while. When the ground is uneven, the course is a series of graceful curves, conforming to the shape of the surface. He runs as though there were not a bone in his back. Occasionally dropping his muzzle to the ground for a

rod or two, and then tossing his head aloft, when satisfied of his course. When he comes to a declivity, he will put his forefeet together, and slide swiftly down it, shoving the snow before him. He treads so softly that you would hardly hear it from any nearness, and yet with such expression that it would not be quite inaudible at any distance."

Surely there is a fine eye for color here, as well as an instinct for that unity in which lies the proof of artistic conception: —

"By the twenty-fifth of September, the red maples generally are beginning to be ripe. Some large ones have been conspicuously changing for a week, and some single trees are now very brilliant. I noticed a small one, half a mile off across a meadow, against the green wood-side there, a far brighter red than the blossoms of any tree in summer, and more conspicuous. I have observed this tree for several autumns invariably changing earlier than its fellows, just as one tree ripens its fruit earlier than another. It might serve to mark the season, perhaps. I should be sorry, if it were cut down. I know of two or three such trees in different parts of our town, which might, perhaps, be propagated from, as early ripeners or September trees, and their seed be advertised in the market, as well as that of radishes, if we cared as much about them.

"At present these burning bushes stand chiefly along the edge of the meadows, or I distinguish them afar on the hill-sides here and there. Sometimes you will see many small ones in a swamp turned quite crimson when all other trees around are still perfectly green, and the former appear so much the brighter for it. They take you by surprise, as you are going by on one side, across the fields, thus early in the season, as if it were some gay encampment of the red men, or other foresters, of whose arrival you had not heard.

"Some single trees, wholly bright scarlet, seen against others of their kind still freshly green, or against evergreens, are more memorable than whole groves will be by-and-by. How beautiful, when a whole tree is like one great scarlet fruit full of ripe juices, every leaf, from lowest limb to topmost spire, all aglow, especially if you look toward the sun! What more remarkable object can there be in the landscape? Visible for miles, too fair to be believed. If such a phenomenon occurred but once, it would be handed down by tradition to posterity, and get into the mythology at last.

"The whole tree thus ripening in advance of its fellows attains a singular pre-eminence, and sometimes maintains it for a week or two. I am thrilled at the sight of it, bearing aloft its scarlet standard for the regiment of green-clad foresters around, and I go

half a mile out of my way to examine it. A single tree becomes thus the crowning beauty of some meadowy vale, and the expression of the whole surrounding forest is at once more spirited for it.

"A small red maple has grown, perchance, far away at the head of some retired valley, a mile from any road, unobserved. It has faithfully discharged the duties of a maple there, all winter and summer, neglected none of his economies, but added to its stature in the virtue which belongs to a maple, by a steady growth for so many months, never having gone gadding abroad, and is nearer heaven than it was in the spring. It has faithfully husbanded its sap, and afforded a shelter to the wandering bird, has long since ripened its seeds and committed them to the winds, and has the satisfaction of knowing, perhaps, that a thousand little well-behaved maples are already settled in life somewhere. It deserves well of Maple-dom. Its leaves have been asking it from time to time, in a whisper, 'When shall we redden?' And now, in this month of September, this month of travelling, when men are hastening to the sea side, or the mountains, or the lakes, this modest maple, still without budging an inch, travels in its reputation,—runs up its scarlet flag on that hill-side, which shows that it has finished its summer's work before all other trees, and withdraws from the contest. At the eleventh

hour of the year, the tree which no scrutiny could have detected here when it was most industrious is thus, by the tint of its maturity, by its very blushes, revealed at last to the careless and distant traveller, and leads his thoughts away from the dusty road into those brave solitudes which it inhabits. It flashes out conspicuous with all the virtue and beauty of a maple. —*Acer rubrum.*

* * * *

"Notwithstanding the red maple is the most intense scarlet of any of our trees, the sugar maple has been the most celebrated, and Michaux in his 'Sylva' does not speak of the autumnal color of the former. About the second of October these trees, both large and small, are most brilliant, though many are still green. In 'sprout-lands' they seem to vie with one another, and ever some particular one in the midst of the crowd will be of a peculiarly pure scarlet, and by its more intense color attract our eye even at a distance, and carry off the palm. A large red maple swamp, when at the height of its change, is the most obviously brilliant of all tangible things, where I dwell, so abundant is this tree with us. It varies much both in form and color. A great many are merely yellow, more scarlet, others scarlet deepening into crimson, more red and common. Look at yonder swamp of maples mixed

with pines at the base of a pine-clad hill, a quarter of a mile off, so that you get the full effect of the bright colors without detecting the imperfections of the leaves, and see their yellow, scarlet, and crimson fires, of all tints, mingled and contrasted with the green. Some maples are yet green, only yellow or crimson-tipped on the edges of their flakes, like the edges of a hazel-nut bur; some are wholly brilliant scarlet, raying out regularly and finely every way bilaterally, like the veins of a leaf; others, of a more irregular form, when I turn my head slightly, emptying out some of its earthiness and concealing the trunk of the tree, seem to rest heavily flake on flake, like yellow and scarlet clouds, wreath upon wreath, or like snowdrifts driving through the air, stratified by the wind. It adds greatly to the beauty of such a swamp at this season that, even though there may be no other trees interspersed, it is not seen as a simple mass of color, but different trees being of different colors and hues, the outline of each crescent tree top is distinct, and where one laps on to another. Yet a painter would hardly venture to make them thus distinct a quarter of a mile off.

"As I go across a meadow directly toward a low rising ground this bright afternoon, I see, some fifty rods off toward the sun, the top of a maple swamp just appearing over the sheeny russet edge of the hill, a stripe apparently twenty rods long by ten feet deep, of

the most intensely brilliant scarlet, orange and yellow, equal to any flowers or fruits or any tints ever painted. As I advance, lowering the edge of the hill which makes the firm foreground or lower frame of the picture, the depth of the brilliant grove revealed steadily increases, suggesting that the whole of the enclosed valley is filled with such color. One wonders that the tithingmen and fathers of the town are not out to see what the trees mean by their high colors and exuberance of spirits, fearing that some mischief is brewing. I do not see what the Puritans did at this season when the maples blaze out in scarlet. They certainly could not have worshipped in groves then. Perhaps that is what they built meeting-houses and fenced them round with horse sheds for."

With Thoreau, in one word, everything is seen in relation to human sentiment and fitness. He is a reconciler. His great aim is to recommend Nature to man; to prove her worthy of the recommendation, and so induce and enhance the idea of individuality, which, in midst of all her masses and mighty generalities, she everywhere faithfully celebrates. Thoreau went to Nature an individualist, and came back the prophet of society, as truly reconstructed, with liberty for its groundwork,—but liberty which would give no quarter to license of any kind. Sobriety, severity,

and self-respect, foundation of all true sociality, are his motto. He himself says:—

"I think I love society as much as most, and am ready enough to fasten myself like a bloodsucker for the time to any full-blooded man that comes in my way. *I am naturally no hermit*, but might possibly sit out the sturdiest frequenter of the bar-room if my business called me thither."

It was quite consistent with this that he should hate slavery,—should speak nobly and unceasingly for the valiant John Brown, of Harper's Ferry. His heart beat true for human rights, though he was wont to speak depreciatingly of professed philanthropists, who were apt to ignore broad distinctions, where he maintained them,—distinctions, too, which he held were essential to be recognized in view at once of social well-being and true individuality. In fact Thoreau was a man of ready public spirit, though he declined to be interested in the petty machinery of forced and over-heated local politics, just as Emerson tells us that he listened impatiently to news or *bon mots* gleaned from London circles; and that though he tried to be civil, these anecdotes fatigued him. Wrapt up with his apparent disregard of elegance, he had with him a marked air of elegance which could consist without accessories. "He was short of stature, firmly built, of light complexion, serious blue eyes [right

well-opened], and a grave aspect." So says Emerson, and the portrait given at the opening of the 'Excursions' justifies the words. The expression is at once shrewd and spiritual,—the Yankee traits really there, yet refined away in earnest thought and wise foresight. The eyes soft and thoughtful, yet wondrously penetrating, expressive of sharp mother-wit and kindliness and generosity without stint; the nose full, and yet sensitive in the nostril; the mouth expressive of resolution and self-respecting calmness; and the forehead a round, rising arch, bespeaking fervid emotions. Such was Thoreau,—one of the most vigorous, independent, and true-hearted of Americans, who would easily have been turned into a martyr, notwithstanding that he held so lightly by formulas. His cutting brusqueness, of which even his dearest friends sometimes made mention, arose out of the seriousness and severity of his nature, which made him abhor all triviality and vain conversation, and which, combined with such keen imagination and fiery hatred of wrong as characterized him, is always a main ingredient in heroism. What could be finer than his own account of himself, when he was cast into the county prison, because of that quarrel over the taxes, which he would not pay:—

"I have paid no poll tax for six years. I was put into a jail once on this account, for one night; and,

as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. I wondered that it should have concluded at length that this was the best use to put me to, and had never thought to avail itself of my services in any way. I saw that if there was a stone wall between me and my townsmen there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. I felt as if I alone of all my townsmen had paid my tax. They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are underbred. In every threat and in every compliment there was a blunder, for they thought that my chief desire was to stand on the other side of that stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and *they* were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot come at any person at whom they have a grudge, will abuse his dog.

Seldom has the Puritan idea of freedom of soul

been better illustrated,— unless perhaps by John Bunyan, in Bedford jail. Thoreau drew from his Saxon ancestors, on the female side, a dash of the Puritan blood, and, on a point of right, he would have fought, and borne all indignity. In this case his friends came to his rescue, and he went free.

But amidst his earnestness, his dignified humor does not forsake him. He lays his eye level to circumstances, and looks along them to a fuller result. Philosophic he is, and more, as the following account of his jail experiences will prove: —

"The night in prison was novel and interesting enough; the prisoners in their shirt-sleeves were enjoying a chat and the evening air in the doorway when I entered. But the jailor said, 'Come, boys, it is time to lock up;' and so they dispersed, and I heard the sound of their steps returning into the hollow apartments. My room-mate was introduced to me by the jailor as 'a first-rate fellow, and a clever man.' When the door was locked, he showed me where to hang my hat, and how he managed matters there. The rooms were whitewashed once a month; and this one, at least, was the whitest, most simply furnished, and probably the neatest apartment in the town. He naturally wanted to know where I came from, and what had brought me there; and when I had told him, I asked him, in my turn, how he came there, presuming him

to be an honest man, of course; and as the world goes, I believed he was.' 'Why,' said he, 'they accuse me of burning a barn; but I never did it.' As near as I could discover, he had probably gone to bed in a barn when drunk, and smoked his pipe there; and so a barn was burnt. He had the reputation of being a clever man, had been there some three months waiting for his trial to come on, and would have to wait as much longer; but he was quite domesticated and contented, since he got his board for nothing, and thought that he was well treated.

"He occupied one window, and I the other; and I saw that, if one stayed there long, his principal business would be to look out at the window. I had soon read all the tracts that were left there, and examined where former prisoners had broken out, and where a grate had been sawed off, and heard the history of the various occupants of the room; for I found that even here there was a history and a gossip, which never circulated beyond the walls of the jail. Probably this is the only house in the town where verses are composed, which are afterwards printed in circular form, but not published. I was shown quite a long list of verses, which were composed by some young men who had been detected in an attempt to escape, who avenged themselves by singing them.

"I pumped my fellow-prisoner as dry as I could,

for fear I should never see him again; but at length he showed me which was my bed, and left me to blow out the lamp.

"It was like travelling into a far country, such as I had never expected to behold, to lie there for one night. It seemed to me that I never had heard the town clock strike before, nor the evening sounds of the village; for we slept with the windows open, which were inside the grating. It was to see my native village in the light of the Middle Ages; and our Concord was turned into a Rhine stream, and visions of knights and castles passed before me. They were the voices of old burghers that I heard in the streets. I was an involuntary spectator and auditor of whatever was done and said in the kitchen of the adjacent village inn,—a wholly new and rare experience to me. It was a closer view of my native town. I was fairly inside of it. I never had seen its institutions before. This is one of its peculiar institutions, for it is a shire town. I began to comprehend what its inhabitants were about.

"In the morning our breakfasts were put through the hole in the door, in small, oblong, square tin pans, made to fit, and holding a pint of chocolate, with brown bread, and an iron spoon. When they called for the vessels again, I was green enough to return what bread I had left; but my comrade seized it, and said that I should lay that up for a lunch or din-

ner. Soon after he was let out for haying in a neighboring field, whither he went every day, and would not be back till noon, so he bade me good day, saying that he doubted if he should see me again. . . .

"It was formally the custom in our village, when a poor debtor came out of jail, for his acquintances to salute him, looking through their fingers, which were crossed to represent the grating of a jail window, 'How do ye do?' My neighbors did not thus salute me, but first looked at me, and then at one another, as if I had returned from a long journey. I was put into jail as I was going to the shoemaker's to get a shoe which was mended. When I was let out the next morning I proceeded to finish my errand, and having put on my mended shoe, joined a huckleberry party, who were impatient to put themselves under my conduct; and in half an hour — for the horse was soon tackled — was in the midst of a huckleberry field, in one of our highest hills, two miles off, and then the State was nowhere to be seen.

"I have never declined paying the highway tax, because I am as desirous of being a good neighbor as I am of being a bad subject; and, as for supporting schools, I am doing my part to educate my fellow-countrymen now. It was for no particular item in the tax-bill that I refused to pay it. I simply wished to withdraw and for a time stand apart from it effectually."

Probably it was this quality of self-sufficience, associated as it was with such wonderful clearness of aim and skill in finding easy means to attain the end in view, which made Mr. Emerson signalize his practical ability in this regretful strain: —

"Had his genius been only contemplative, he had been fitted for his life; but with his energy and practical ability he seemed born for a great enterprise and for command; and I so much regret the loss of his rare powers of action that I cannot help counting it a fault in him that he had no ambition. Wanting this, instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry party. Pounding beans is good to the end of pounding empires one of these days; but if at the end of the years it is still only beans! . . ."

Thoreau has been too absolutely claimed by the transcendentalists and treated as a mere disciple of Emerson. This has led in large measure to his being rejected all too decisively by the purely scientific men, for whom, nevertheless, he has many hints that are equally original and valuable. It must be admitted, however, that if he had been less of a poet, he would have recommended himself better to the scientific class, precisely as he would have been a better Emersonian, if his eye for concrete facts had been less keen. He is impatient of certain forms of analysis,

— more concerned to gain insight into the inner nature than to anatomize and win knowledge of the mere details of structure.

Both these circumstances have tended to deprive Thoreau of the credit that belongs to him. After you deduct in the most exacting manner all that is due to Emerson and Transcendentalism, and allow that in some points he failed under the most rigid reckonings of science, much remains to establish his claims on our sympathy and deference. His instincts were true; his patience was unbounded; he never flinched from pain or labor when it lay in the way of his object; and complaint he was never known to utter on his own account.

No hard logical line ought to be laid to his utterances in the sphere of personal opinion or liking. He confessedly wrote without regard to abstract consistency. His whole life was determined by sympathy, though he sometimes seemed cynical. We are fain to think, indeed, that under his brusqueness there lay a suppressed humorous questioning of his reader's capacity and consequent right to understand him and to offer sympathy. If, on this account, he may be said to have sacrificed popularity, he paid the penalty, which people often pay in actual life for too consciously hiding their true feelings under a veil of indifference;

and it is much if we find that the cynical manner seldom intruded on the real nature.

The story of Thoreau's life has a value, too, inasmuch as we see in him how the tendency of culture, and of theoretic speculation towards rationalistic indifference, and a general unconcern in the fate of others, may be checked by a genuine love of Nature, and by the self-denials she can prompt in the regard that she conveys and enforces for the individual life and for freedom. The practical lesson of a true Transcendentalism, faithfully applied, must issue thus,— and it is the same whether we see it in St. Francis, in the saintly Eckhart, in William Law or in the naturalist Thoreau. All life is sanctified by the relation in which it is seen to the source of life, — an idea which lies close to the Christian spirit, however much a fixed and rationalized dogmatic relation to it may tend to desiccate and render bare and arid those spaces of the individual nature which can bloom and blossom only through sympathy and emotions that ally themselves with what is strictly mystical.

It was through Nature, to which he retreated, that Thoreau recovered his philanthropic interests, — his love of mankind, which he might have come near to losing through the spirit of culture which can only encourage cynicism and weariness in view of artificial conventions and pretexts. Thoreau would have shrunk

with loathing horror from the touch of that savant who, as Agassiz seriously assures us, said to him that the age of real civilization would have begun when you could go out and shoot a man for scientific purposes. This seems very awful when put baldly on paper: it is but the necessary expression of the last result of culture coldly rationalistic, of science determinately materialistic, since both alike must operate towards loosening the bonds of natural sympathy. Thoreau was saved from the 'modern curse of culture' by his innocent delights, and his reverence for all forms of life so stimulated. His strong faith in the higher destiny of humanity through the triumph of clearer moral aims, and the apprehension of a good beyond the individual or even the national interest, would have linked him practically with the Christian philanthropist rather than with the cultured indifferentists or worshipper of artistic beauty or knowledge for their own sakes.

In this view Thoreau, in spite of his transcendentalism, or as some would say, professed pantheism, was a missionary. His testimony bears in the direction of showing that the study of Nature, when pursued in such a way as to keep alive individual affection and the sentiments of reverence, is one that practically must work in alliance with enlightened Christian conceptions, and that in a moment of real peril, when cruelty and wrong and disorder else would triumph,

the true votary of nature will be on the side of the Christian hero who suffers wrong to redeem the weak. Thoreau thus exhibits to us one way of uplifting science, in relieving her from the false associations which would disconnect her from common humanity and set her in opposition to its strongest instincts,— the science falsely so called, which by baseless assumptions would demoralize, materialize, and brutify, and refuse scope to the exercise of the more ideal and beneficent part of man because it fails to comprehend it or to cover it adequately by its exacting definitions.

It would be ungrateful in us, who are so deeply indebted to Emerson for many benefits, to analyze at length the deteriorating effect which his teachings had, in certain directions on Thoreau. But they are too outstanding to be wholly passed over without notice. It is patent that Thoreau's peculiar gifts led him to deal with outward things. He was an observer, a quick-eyed and sympathetic recorder of the inner life of nature. Emerson's teaching developed a certain self-conscious and theorizing tendency far from natural to Thoreau. He is often too concerned to seek justification for certain facts in purely ideal conceptions which nevertheless have not been reduced to coherency with a general scheme. He is too indifferent to the ordinary scientific order, too much intent on giving us a cosmology in fragments, in which paradox shall star-

tle, if it does not enlighten. Whenever Thoreau proceeds to air abstract statements he is treading on insecure ground; his love of Emersonian philosophy leads him some strange dances. Above all, this foreign element is seen in the effusive egotism which constantly appears when he leaves the ground of facts for general disquisition. He would fain attract us by forced freshness and by the effort to utter paradoxical and startling statements. No man could be more clear, simple, direct, incisive than he is when he has a real nature-object before his eye or his mind; for memory never fails him. But when he is abstract and oracular, he is oftentimes more puzzling than his master. When Thoreau is telling his own story,—what he saw, what he heard, what he did,—he is simply delightful. His pantheism, so far as it was a conscious thing with him, is not inviting; and would often be very hard and unattractive, were it not that his instincts were far truer than his mind was exact on the logical side, and saved him from the natural effects of such vagary and paradoxical assertions. But we can dissociate Thoreau's merits from these adhesions. His Emersonian pantheism did not destroy his finer sensibilities and sympathies, which made him, as he certainly was, one of Nature's diviners and reconcilers,—a pantheist as all true poets have been, as Christ himself was. Like many others, he brought a double gift; but that which

is truest and most available is that of which he made but little account. So it is that we believe we can detach from his writings what will serve to illustrate the better side of his genius. Fitly and fully done, this cannot but prove a service; for we can ill afford wholly to miss the benefit of the record of such a peculiar experience,—a discerning and divining instinct, on the whole wisely directed to its true purpose, and revealing rare possibilities in human life, new relationships and sources of deep joy.

It is very striking to trace out the varied ways by which different minds reach an identical practical result. The quietism of John Woolman, the Quaker, would hardly have met with sympathy from Thoreau in many points; and yet how the lines of their thought and mysticism, variant as they seem, meet in one point. Thoreau would have sympathized with and endorsed these remarkable records, which we cite with the more pleasure as they will be found to illustrate the law to which we were just giving expression as to the preparation a true communion with Nature must ever give for genuine philanthropic interests: —

"I was early convinced in my mind," says Woolman, in his journal, "that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart doth love and reverence God the Creator, and learns to exercise true justice and goodness, not only towards all men, but also

towards brute creatures; that as the mind was moved by an inward principle to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible Being, by the same principle it was moved to love Him in all His manifestations in the visible world; that as by his breath the flame of life was kindled in all animal sensible creatures, to say we love God as unseen, and at the same time to exercise cruelty towards the least creature moving by His life, or by life derived from Him, was a contradiction in itself. . . . I looked upon the works of God in this visible world, and an awfulness covered me; my heart was tender and often contrite, and universal love to my fellow-creatures increased in me; this will be understood by those who have trodden in the same path. Some glances of real beauty may be seen in their faces who dwell in true meekness." So when during his brief peregrination through England he was saddened by the dire development of the slave trade, "under the weight of this exercise," he says, "the sight of innocent birds among the branches, and sheep in their pastures, who act according to the will of their Creator, hath at times tended to mitigate my trouble."

Indeed the idea is forced upon us that all true Christians, in spite of variety of dogmatic forms, must be Transcendentalists in the sense that Thoreau was. They must see all life as flowing from the Source of life,—God manifesting Himself richly in the works

of Nature,—casting over all the evidences of His grace, of which the creature makes himself the *conscious* partaker by the temporary sense of separation in the independent effort of will towards harmonizing his immediate surroundings with this vast unity. Thus in the return to Nature, his idea of God's presence is intensified and deepened.

Madame Sand, at one place, writes as follows:—

"Nature is eternally young, beautiful, bountiful. She pours out beauty and poetry for all that live. She pours it out on all plants, and the plants are permitted to expand in it freely. She possesses the secret of happiness, and no man has been able to take it away from her. The happiest of men would he be, who, possessing the science of his labor and working with his hands, earning his comfort and his freedom by the exercise of his intelligent force, found time to live by the heart and by the brain, to understand his own work, and to love the work of God. The artist has satisfaction of this kind in the contemplation and reproduction of nature's beauty; but when he sees the affliction of those who people this paradise of earth, the upright and human hearted artist feels a trouble in the midst of his enjoyment. The happy day will be when mind, heart, and hands shall be alive together, and shall work in concert; when there shall be a harmony between God's munificence and man's delight in

it. Then instead of the piteous and frightful figure of Death, stepping whip in hand by the peasant's side in the field, the allegorical painter will place there a radiant angel, sowing with full hands the blessed grain in the smoking furrow.

"And the dream of a kindly, free, poetic, laborious, and simple existence for the tiller of the field is not so hard to realize that it must be sent away into the world of chimeras. Virgil's sweet and sad cry, 'O happy peasants, if they but knew their own blessings!' is a regret; but like all regrets, it is at the same time a prediction. The day will come, when the laborer may be also an artist, not in the sense of rendering Nature's beauty,— a matter which will be then of much less importance,— but in the sense of feeling it. Does not this mysterious intuition of poetic beauty exist in him already in the form of instinct and vague reverie."

Mr. Matthew Arnold* is quite right in founding on Madame Sand's sympathy, purified and strengthened by the true love of Nature, an element which will give her influence in the coming time. This is, in the words of Mrs. Browning,—

"The True Pan
Who by low creatures leads to heights of love."

"Here," says Mr. Matthew Arnold, "lies the strength of George Sand, and of her second movement after

* *Fortnightly Review* for June, 1877.

the first movement of energy and revolt was over, towards nature and beauty, towards the country, primitive life, the peasant. She regarded not with the selfish and solitary joy of the artist who but seeks to appropriate them for his own purposes, she regarded them as a treasure of immense and hitherto unknown application, as a vast power of healing and delight for all."

This complete brotherhood of sympathy is the bright prophecy of a union as yet but dreamt of. When men shall cease to define things that lie beyond the intellect, and fear to debate and to dogmatize because they directly realize the presences that 'disturb with the joy of elevated thought,'—when Nature shall be but a medium of purer communion, and all her beauty and terror only bespeak undeveloped possibilities of human love and fellowship,—then the era of true toleration shall have begun. Already we see hints and prophecies of it, travelling through enlarging spaces of life far apart from each other. As the sun at his first rising strikes the distant mountains, that seem to be further separated from each other than they really are by the dark mists that linger in the valleys, which by and by shall be radiant also; so in the moral and spiritual life of man. St. Francis, in the Middle Ages, speaks a word that awakes the same echo in minds so diverse as those of Thoreau, Wool-

man, and Madame Sand. Nature enforces simplicity; simplicity must erase conventional distinctions or the sense of them, in the line of a culture whose elements are open to all; hence a reverence for human effort and human suffering, and an endeavor to unite the poor and the rich, the ignorant and the learned, the thinker and the worker in one bond. This is the true return to Nature and simplicity, of which Rousseau presented but a perverted image of vague promise, which a bankrupt society, in its despair, for a moment tried to find happiness in, while it carried all its interested artificiality along with it. This was the poison that lay at basis of that eighteenth century effort at reconstruction, so sincere and earnest in many respects. But it claimed no real self-denial, no surrender to the presences that demand escape from the jarring fetters of conventionalism. In destroying one series, it but created another; and in the effusive sensibility it sanctioned and demanded, it raised anew and in a more dangerous form the very distinctions which it professed to have erased. The worker, as precluded from the luxury of a strained sensibility was, in the last result, relegated to a class apart; equality became a sentiment, a rapture, an æsthetic luxury; Rousseauism returned upon itself, and ended in the very evils which it began by contesting. We wait a new return upon Nature and simplicity, enforcing a fuller and

more intimate sympathy of man with man; Thoreau and Madame Sand, with their kindred, are its prophets.

> "The man,
> Who in this spirit, communes with the forms
> Of Nature, who, with understanding heart,
> Doth know and love such objects as excite
> No morbid passions, no disquietude,
> No vengeance, and no hatred, needs must feel
> The joy of that pure principle of love
> So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught
> Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
> But seek for objects of a kindred love
> In fellow-natures and a kindred joy."

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